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Sermons and Addresses

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WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL

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Sermons and Addresses

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

We have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God.

God created man in the beginning according to His own image. Gazing in divine contemplation upon His essence, He saw there the countless millions of possible things that by one act of His Supreme Will might spring into existence obedient to his irresistible fiat. Each of these would be of necessity an imitation, though feeble and inadequate, of that which can never be equaled. Everything that exists or can exist, the towering mountain or the gently sloping vale, the sweeping impetuous torrent or the smooth-gliding rivulet, the soaring eagle or the timid dove, the fierce and powerful beast of prey or the gentle, trembling lamb, although different in character and habit, though varying in form and figure, all embody, all proclaim, in some degree and manner, the power, the strength, the beauty, the gentleness of their Almighty Creator.

Everything which in His Might God has made must bear the impress of His touch, and the higher in the scale of creation the closer the image, until man comes, the noblest and most perfect creature, a little world in himself, and to God assimilated more closely than aught else terrestrial. As the potter fashions the clay in accord-

ance with the ideal existing in his own mind, so God moulded humanity according to the concept preëxisting from all eternity, in His infinite intelligence. At the touch of the Divine Artificer man sprang from dust to life, a living image of God; and this primal resemblance each man forever bears, for as it came with creation, and is inseparable from it, it can be destroyed only by annihilation.

There is, however, another likeness which is not inevitable, which comes not with creation alone, which depends not only on God's pleasure, but in a great measure upon our choice. It is that likeness by which we are made conformable to Jesus Christ by Whom we were redeemed. It is that likeness which God's grace creates in us, and which as a seal He stamps upon all those, reborn by baptism, who by their actions and lives show themselves faithful followers of his Beloved Son, the examplar of humanity.

By this conformity alone salvation is possible: by it the just are distinguished from the unjust. It elevates man to the Divinity: the absence of it marks him as not of the children of God. In a word, this likeness is the pledge of God's acceptance. With it we are everything: without it we are nothing. With it we are of heaven: without it we are merely of earth. We are destined for heaven: we are all called to be God's friends, not enemies, to partake of the fountains of God's Mercy, not of His Justice. We were destined to carry this likeness in our souls; and if we have it not, the reason is not that God's seal is not ready to mark its impress upon our souls, but because the world has already set upon us its stamp. Where the world rules, God cannot. Either God or the world, but never both. Either God or Mammon is our master; we

cannot serve both. Either the spirit of Christ must animate our souls and inform our actions, or the spirit of the world must deaden and corrupt them. It is for us to choose.

These two influences are not hard to discern. Each has its distinguishing marks: each its individual characters. Let us compare them then, and thus ascertain which is our choice and by which we are ruled.

To be ruled by the spirit of Christ is to be led by the divine impulse along the "narrow way" which leads to Eternal Life. To be ruled by the spirit of the world is to be hurried along the broad and easy road, which leads to destruction. Surely the possession of one or the other of these spirits, these principles of action, God's or the world's, cannot be to any of us a matter of indifference. It is worthy our most serious deliberation. Let us examine our souls; let us search our conscience with the light of faith, and see whether it is true of us, as, according to St. Paul, it should be, — "We have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God."

"By their fruits ye shall know them," says our Lord. By a man's works and actions; by the influence he exerts; by the thousand and one signs of the impression he creates we gather the quality, the source of that spirit which directs his life. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Luke vi, 45.) Such is the decision of Divine Truth.

The controlling spirit is made manifest by its works. Disregard for God's laws, opposition to His commandments, preference for temporal before spiritual things,

is an infallible sign of the presence of the spirit of the world. To cherish evil thoughts, corrupt desires, malicious feelings, perverse sentiments, is to have the spirit of evil. When, on the contrary, the mind is ruled by truth, the heart by good; when the intelligence is governed by God's law, and the heart runs in the way of His commandments, the spirit of Christ rules in us; we show we are possessed by the Spirit of God, not by that of the world.

There are only two classes to one or other of which we must belong. We are either Christ's friends or His enemies. "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." Of which class are we? What are the characteristics of each?

The first mark of Christ's followers, of those ruled by His Spirit, is a spirit of recollection, of retirement. "With desolation is the whole earth made desolate because there is none that considereth in his heart." There is the divinely proclaimed cause of all the evils, sins, and moral crimes which flood the world — "because no man considereth in his heart."

I do not now speak of that formal separation from the world, that privilege of retirement from its din and clamor which belongs to the vocation to the cloister. I am concerned only with that moral separation possible to and incumbent upon all Christians. God has placed us in this world to fulfill the designs of His Providence; and in the world we must work out our salvation. But *in* it, we simply may not be *of* it. This is the detachment which marked the Christians of the primitive ages. It is that by which in later times holy Kings and Princes kept themselves pure and humble amid the blandishments of courts and the corruption of flatterers, and the pomp

of the world. It is a separation which envelops the soul and cloisters it from the noise and confusion of worldly pleasures, aims, and interests, and makes it possible for it to hear and recognize the still, small voice of God. We are here to do God's will, and it is only by recollectedness that we can hear of God's voice. Retirement of soul is the state in which we learn His commands. This, then, is the first mark of God's children. This is the first characteristic of the Spirit of Christ.

From this recollection and reflection must come a knowledge of self; and self-knowledge is necessary to all vital religion. No other knowledge can make up for it. Without it all other knowledge may be only a snare. From recollectedness and self-knowledge comes the realization of the necessity of penance. For knowing what we are in very truth, and what we should be according to justice: and comparing the elevation of grace and the perfection to which we should aspire, and which God demands of us, with the knowledge of our innumerable sins and offenses, our defiance of the law of God, our "trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of His Testament an unholy thing," how can we but conclude that punishment must wipe away such stains, and penance undo what self-will and self-indulgence have done amiss?

Hence penance is the necessary outcome of reflection, the second characteristic of the Spirit of Christ, as willfulness and license are of the spirit of the world.

There is significance in the ensign under which a soldier fights. The banner that leads him to battle speaks to him of the spirit in which he must fight. Over the ranks of the Roman legions flew the eagle with wings spread towards the enemy, and rapacious beak open as

if about to make them his prey. They fought for empire, and the eagle led them to booty. The Cross is our standard. It stands ever on our altars laden with the Sacred Body of our God. Look, then, upon your crucifix and learn what it teaches. Is it thirst for wealth, or fame, or fortune? No! Suffering, self-denial, mortification are the only thoughts it inspires. "Take up thy cross and follow Me" are the words of our Crucified King. He, like the eagle, stretches out His arms, as though flying upon the spoil; but the spoil is human hearts, the bodies and souls of those whom He redeemed, for whom He died. It was by His Death and Suffering, His Cross and Passion, that He redeemed them. Therefore the Cross always speaks to us of the price of His victory and our Redemption, and of the cost of all victory and all redemption in His Kingdom. We are the subjects of a King who died on the Cross "that He might win us to God"; and He has chosen the Cross as His standard, that we may learn that we too must die on a cross to keep ourselves God's. There is no other way.

For us penance is, then, a necessity, not a choice. By penance alone is the foul blot of sin erased; by penance alone is grace regained; by penance alone our lost heritage is recovered; by penance alone is hell avoided and the foretaste of heaven restored.

O holy penance, companion of the man God; nurse and mother of Charity; safeguard and counselor of purity; defender of innocence; sweet guide to Paradise, what wonders hast thou wrought in the human soul. Let Magdalen, and Peter, and Augustine testify what power thou hast, what divine transformations thou hast wrought when innocence had fled. From sinners they became saints;

from enemies, friends; from outcasts, children! This wonderful change, this ineffable transformation of wolf into lamb is the effect of penance. What words can speak the praises of so powerful a virtue!

Self-indulgence, self-will, intellectual pride, even more than unbridled passion, have been the ruin of the human race. By these fell the first man; and by these has fallen every man since then. But penance has achieved more than these have destroyed. It has re-created sinful man, raised him from the dust by making him capable of Divine grace, and "a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Hence, beloved brethren, this beautiful virtue is another mark of the Spirit of Christ. Let the world mock at the fleetness of time, and seek to bury the remorse of sin in dissipation and pleasure. Let it drown the voice of conscience in the discordant music of self-indulgence, but we who have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit of Christ will remember His bidding, "Take up thy cross and follow Me."

Our standard the Cross we shall follow wherever it leads. It will be through trials and sufferings in this world, but we are certain that these passed, it will bring us finally to victory in "the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Recollection and Penance. Behold the two characteristics of the children of God. Behold the watchwords of our warfare and life. Behold the conditions of winning the eternal life. Do we realize their meaning? Do we comprehend their necessity? Do we at least desire to live them? If we do, then we are of the Spirit of Christ; we bear His character; we possess what will conform us to His Image. But if these be not ours let us beware;

for "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His," says the apostle.

"The spirit of the world," or "the spirit which is of God," — we must have one or the other. It remains with us to choose. God grant us so to be led by the Holy Spirit that we may no longer be "under the law" of sin and death.

"To live is to learn" is a proverb, the true import of which few of us realize. Human life is a study. The world is but the little classroom where men by every act and word are striving to copy upon the book of time their own biography. What that task is, what its success, must be determined by one fixed standard, the sole criterion of all that is of value in the man. "Ideals rule the world." If the model of the artist is poor the artist's skill must fail. If the copy is blurred or the letters badly formed, the child whose hand repeats them must be only a poor penman. Men are imitators. The children of to-day sit at the feet of their elders and learn by the story of their lives what life must be to them. The experience of the generation just past is the master of our generation. Cæsar was Napoleon's chief; and the men who in our own time attain preëminence in any path of human skill or industry, will be the rulers of the destinies of men yet unborn: so powerful must ever be the influence of past greatness upon present events.

Since then we must be copyists, since we are made what we are by the realization of some ideal, it cannot be of trivial import that our ideal be one really worthy of imitation: that its realization in our life be a harmonious and beautiful work, a masterpiece in its way, a fulfillment of honest hopes, a consummation of earnest endeavor. It is not sufficient for us to desire greatness

of soul, nobility of heart, loftiness of purpose and character. We must have these virtues presented to our soul in a manner concrete and individualized. This God has done for us. He has set before us a model perfect in the perfection of the Divinity itself. No merely human hero gifted with one virtue in an excellent degree and the prey of a hundred defects: no great man who in public dazzles the popular sight with his magnanimity and disgusts the spectators of his private career by his pettiness: no demigod, but God Himself, the essence of all that comes under the name of greatness and nobility. The lesson of our life here, then, is the imitation of Christ; our work is to reproduce, as far as our feeble strength will permit, the image of His goodness, His unselfishness, His nobility, in the soul given us to perfect into that fullness of growth which makes it capable of seeing God. From Bethlehem to Golgotha the thrilling scenes of Jesus' life are set forth, perfect models for our imitation, but upon the Cross, every virtue of His life, every form of benevolent action, every type of divinely human mercy and compassion is concentrated. As His Death upon the Cross was His object in coming into the world, so it represents in all its fullness the perfect model of true humanity. His Death was the summing up of his life. Standing during these last days of Lent under the very shadow of the Cross we look up to the Crucified God and ask Him in this Death to teach us how to live. There upon that uplifted bed of torture, the Cross, hangs in more than human agony our Ideal, our Model. Gazing upon this dying God, let us think of what life ought to be, let us reflect on what *our* life ought to be.

We come at last to the closing scenes in the mediato-

rial battle: Raising his Head, Christ with outstretched Body, extending His hands as a Priest offering Sacrifice, utters the final sacrificial words, "It is finished." The rabble of mocking tormentors have one by one stolen silently down the hillside, across the valley, up through the ravine into Jerusalem. There is now no sound of weeping, nor of mockery, nor of blasphemy below. The horror of awful darkness is creeping apace over the whole scene; night, black night, at midday. Profound silence reigns there on the barren hill. The scene of the awful tragedy is hushed to a stillness like that of death. The seconds seem hours. Their passing is marked only by the subdued sobbing of those faithful ones below the Cross. Darkness and silence. It seems as if all must now be over; it seems as if Christ's agony must have ended. But hark from out the darkness thick as midnight that hides the last struggle of God with evil, through the tomb-like silence there comes a voice; not a shriek of pain, not a moan of anguish, not a cry of complaint, but a voice that says in tones of triumphant victory over anguish and pain, "It is finished."

What mean these mysterious words? What is finished? What at that hour attained its completion, arrived at its perfection, stood forth entire, without defect, finished? Answer, O Son of God! Tell us before death robs us of Thy human presence, and the separation of soul from body throws up that impenetrable rampart that will sever us from Thee until death comes to us to open again the blessed sight eye to eye with God in the flesh; while yet thy divine body quivers with the thrill of human life, answer so that we may understand this mystery hidden under the words, "It is finished."

The pale, bloodless lips move not, nor return an an-

swer to our question. But the Holy Spirit of God breathes over the listening world this answer. Sacrifice is finished! Example is finished! Redemption is finished.

Sacrifice is finished. The Son of God from His throne the Cross, the Altar of the perfect Sacrifice, the seat of the Victor Monarch, looks back through the boundless ages of eternity back into the eternity before time; he gazes with the infinite vision of the Divinity back into that shoreless ocean of existence that was His before this atom of creation, the universe, came forth, and sees there in the mind of His Father this great design, this transcendent plan of the perfect sacrifice, the perfect example, the perfect redemption. He sees this purpose in the eternal decrees of God, that He, the Son of God, should become man. He sees the beginning of time, the origin of this creation which was the making of Man to the likeness of that image which He was to assume. All this He sees, looking back over the ages unchronicled by man. Sin there He beholds, entering into the good that God had made, and bringing with it the need of deliverance and restoration. Then came the moment when lifting up His voice in the courts of Heaven He cried out to mankind languishing in the despair of sin, to nations yearning, and groaning in the pit of moral corruption, to sinners gazing with blind eyes, blind with tears and longing for the desire of the whole world, "Behold I come."

Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, were sanctified by that advent. The air above them, their hills, their lakes were consecrated by the contact of His sacred Flesh. Now in all the vigor of perfect manhood with His Hands outstretched over the whole world like a High Priest of the perfect oblation He utters those sacrificial words, "It is finished — the work given me to perform is completed.

Not one of the many trials placed in my path have I shrunk from, — the poverty, the obscurity, the persecutions of infancy and childhood; the weakness, the exposure, the want, that marked my youth; the stubbornness, the selfishness, the cowardice, the treachery of men; the shame, the torture, the Agony, the Passion of this last moment! Behold, O Father, look down, O God Eternal, and be witness, O Universe, all this is now complete, all perfected, all accomplished. It is finished! Hear now, O God, ye angels, man, aye and ye powers of darkness, hear the triumphant proclamation, published from this gifted throne: It is finished!"

Our ideal and our model in life is Jesus, in the hours of His Passion, as well as in His life. How then are these words to be understood in reference to our lives? What import have they for our career? What bearing have they upon our destiny? There is an appointed course for every man to run. We came into this world as separate individuals. Each has a separate existence; each a separate way; each an individual duty; each a particular and personal responsibility.

For us who profess to follow even from afar in the footprints of Christ there is no shifting of responsibility. It is all our own. We may give and take assistance; we may lighten or increase the burden of human joy or sorrow; but each act that is performed, each deed accomplished, leaves our hands stamped with the seal of our ownership, a seal indelible, ineffaceable, that will remain forever upon the deed. Men's paths interlace, as the unseen paths of countless ships at sea, or the myriad courses of birds in their flight; but though they intertwine and interweave, and intermingle, they can never lose their identity; never become the same, never be assimilated; but each one must

stand forth unique, particular, distinct. Each man has a purpose in the world, and though he himself be often unconscious of it, God never is. Each man can say as Christ did, "To this end was I born." Some lives tend to the accomplishment of some event that changes the face of nations, some deed that causes the world to pause and hold its breath for very awe and admiration, some act that stands out in bold capitals in the book that men call history. Some lives are enacted upon the lofty stage, with all the splendor of dramatic surroundings upon which is riveted the gaze of all humanity. Other destinies are wrought out according to God's design, hidden, unseen, unknown, like the limpid waters of some pool far beyond the path of man, some little mountain brooklet fringed with mosses, into which the stars of heaven, God's eyes, alone look down. But whether our work be obscure before the world it matters little. It is our work, the one individual thing for which we shall be held responsible, the one life upon the success of which must stand or fall our hopes for a blessed immortality, the one life entrusted to our keeping that we may return it, at its close, to God as Christ did, with His words, "It is finished."

Now that we understand the lesson of this word spoken to us by our Redeemer amid all the agonies of His Crucifixion, what are we to do to execute the precept? How are we to perfect our life? Again look up to the Cross, for there must you learn not only the meaning of the word, but the means to accomplish the command it contains. Look up to the wounded form that hangs suspended there between earth and heaven, in the bleak chill air of early spring, alone, deserted, heart-broken, for He will not allow Himself even the luxury of tears. Look up and ask Him what made all this necessary; what de-

manded this awful ending of that innocent life. What was it? Ah, no need to ask. Sin; sin only — *my* sin; the sins of my life, the guilt of my actions, the faults of my conduct. It was this alone that made such sacrifice a necessity. It was the blotting out of them that made His sacrifice complete; that made His life finished. It is sin, then, alone, that stands between my life work and God; that makes the awful rent in the robe of my existence, that renders it incomplete, unfinished. Those sins of which we and God alone are conscious; those sins that when we would lull ourselves to repose cry out to us with hideous mocking tones: Behold me, I am yours! You seek in vain to bury me; you strive in vain to conceal me! I am a part of your life: I am the stains upon your soul. Ignore me if you will, but disown me you never can. You are responsible for me. I will eat like the moth into the most precious fabric of your life. I will gnaw into the golden threads of your good deeds, until they rot and decay and the web of your life is rent and torn to shreds. Unfinished! When the web of life shall be held up for inspection, there shall be neither completeness nor symmetry to the design, but the blurred, imperfect outline of an unfinished work.

God will accept at the last day no half-made gift. They alone can look for the smile of approval and the word of approbation and the crown of merit who bring with them to the judgment seat of God a perfect oblation, a whole sacrifice, a complete offering. Who shall dare upon that dread day to come before Him to present to His Eternal Majesty a life that is a failure? How will he stand before the face of God's wrath, Who opens the book of his life passed upon earth only to read there the records of iniquity and crime, of a life of wasted powers,

of blasted hopes? The drunkard who throws away God's noblest gift to man, the irreligious man who refuses to bend the knee before God's altar, or perform those sacred duties which God and His Church impose upon him, the blasphemer who trifles with the sacred name at whose mention Hell trembles, the faithless husband, the unjust master, the dishonest merchant, when death comes and they stand at the threshold of eternity and look back upon all that they might have done, and all that they should have done, but the little, the very little, that in reality they have accomplished, how can they turn to God and say as Christ said, "It is finished"? How can they peacefully and triumphantly close the book from which will be drawn the verdict of eternity, if only sin and faithlessness and neglect stand forth in glowing letters?

Not all the evils that flesh is heir to, not all the suffering that humanity can bear, not all the grief that can fill the heart of man, not all the disappointments of which human life is full, can ever compare with the unutterable agony of him who at the end of his earthly career is driven to the cruel admission that his life has been a failure; that the time has arrived when the work must drop from his hand incomplete, unfinished. His life is not a failure perhaps before the world, not unfinished as men's judgment goes, but only in God's sight, because he has refused to coöperate in God's design; because during that life he recognized not God's purpose in his creation; because during that life he had time to attend to every other work but the one work necessary for him, — the salvation of his own immortal soul. For every silly pleasure, for every childish toy, for every foolish vanity there was time and leisure, but for God's

glory, for prayer, for duty, for eternity, there was naught but cold indifference. Now he lies helpless, feeble. He has exhausted his strength in the pursuit of the bubble, and as it bursts he beholds the grave opening before him. He recoils at this sudden transformation, and as the soil at his feet yields and he sinks into the yawning tomb, he cries with the wildness of despair, "O God, for one hour more!" The voice dies away into silence. Life is past.

Life is yet ours. Strength is still with us. Let us look up to the cross where Jesus died for us, and ask Him by the cruel pains He suffered to teach us so to order our daily actions that when we stand at the gate of Death we may look back upon a life devoted to God's service, not spotless, perhaps, not without some stains of human frailty, but of exertions supplemented by God's help, woven with one complete design, modeled after Christ Himself, a life complete, — a life finished!

MIRACLES A PROOF OF REVELATION

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

But when the Paraclete shall come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me: And you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning. — JOHN xv, 26, 27.

WHEN by His birth Jesus Christ had confounded the pride and vainglory of mankind; when by His hidden life, unknown and unhonored, He had rebuked the impatience of the ambitious and elevated poverty to a divine virtue; when by His public career He had shown forth the divine truths He had come to reveal, and inculcated by His glorious example the necessity of a right life; when He had attested the reality of His human nature by death, and proved His divinity by His resurrection; when, in a word, His mission was accomplished and His end attained, Christ Jesus, the Teacher of Mankind and the Saviour of the world, raised Himself above the earth, and disappearing from the sight of men ascended to His Father, where now He sits in glory, and shall remain until He comes again to judge the world at the last day.

The time foretold had at length arrived when Galilee and Jerusalem would receive no more upon their soil the impress of His sacred feet, when the twelve should look no more for His coming or going among them, when the synagogues should hear no longer the echo of His voice, nor the crowd stand mute with awe or reverence as He passed. He had completed His work, and now He was

returning to His Father who sent Him. And the world — what is to become of that? Truly it had changed but little in those thirty years, and yet He came to save it. Rome still cherished her idols, and even the Jews to whom He came directly rejected Him, and thus far at least gave little promise of ever doing anything else. True, there are a few who have trusted in His promises and believed His word. But who are they? Men of little intelligence, and of no social standing. A few fishermen, a few gatherers of a petty tax, and some others who seem to have at least no more significance in the world than these. They are noted neither for their knowledge of their Master's teaching nor for their exactitude in their obedience to His precepts. If, then, Christ Himself met with so little success, — He Who was filled with the Divine knowledge of men, their needs, their weaknesses, and their nature; He Who had moulded man as the potter moulds the vessel of clay and turns it to what shape he wills, — what is the world to say to such men as these who seem to be the only ones even willing to speak to it of the new law and the new promise?

Christ once said to them, "When you stand before kings and rulers, be not anxious as to what you shall say." What! these men to stand before kings! Cæsar listen to such men — the lowest order of a despised race! Surely is Christianity a lost cause if its maintenance depends upon such a foundation. But hark. From those lips whose every word is a revelation or a prophecy comes the command which brings with it assurance of fulfillment. "Go," He says to these ignorant, nameless men, "Go teach all nations. Go and preach the Gospel to every creature. My direct mission was to the house of Israel, yours to all humanity. I have lived and labored among one

nation, your work must extend to wherever man is to be found. I have confined my personal labors to the boundaries of Judea, but you must travel on and on, by lake and river, over hill and dale, across mountains and valleys, into the vast and powerful cities where kings hold their court, and out into the dreary places where the savage dwells. I have begun the work in you, you must perfect it in all mankind. Wherever man has left his trace, there must you follow, and there must your voice be raised either in pagan temple, or under the arch of heaven, proclaiming to all the doctrine you have heard Me preach, and offering to all the reward that I have proffered. Hurl from their pedestals the idols they adore, and rear over them the altars of the true God. Take from their hands the incense that they burn to Jove, and make its smoke ascend in fragrance before the throne of Jehovah. Dash to earth the golden cups with the libations poured out to their false deities, and teach them of the flowing of my Blood upon Calvary for their sake. Arrest the revelers in their bacchanalian orgies, and tell them of the virtues of purity and sobriety. Fear not, for I am with you — I, at the sound of whose name heaven bows, and hell trembles ; I, who made the sun to give its light, and the planets to revolve in their spheres ; I, who made the angels to be My messengers and man to be My servant. Fear not, for I am with you. As the Father has sent Me, so now I send you. Go forth and preach the Gospel."

Behold the sublime mission of the Apostles! Behold the ineffable project of God to be accomplished by His Church. From an obscure corner of the world, the divine standard of the new dispensation is to be borne by rude, unlettered men to the utmost regions of the world, and to be planted over pagan temple and heathen palace, until

the despised Galilean shall rule as King over all the nations and the Cross, the symbol of ignominy and scorn, shall crown the diadems of kings.

But what credentials does He give His ambassadors that He has sent them? If they say they are His representatives who will believe them? If they assert that this mission is from heaven who will trust them? Are the nations likely to give credence to every one who claims that his word is true? False prophets and teachers had deceived the world before. Who was to know that these were not of the number? Have they any proofs of their divine commission? Do they bear with them the stamp and seal of the King of Heaven? Mankind may listen to their teaching as to the strange vagaries of a novel philosophy, or at most admire their doctrines as the alluring device of some philanthropist; but without some visible testimony, some manifest proof, some unmistakable sign of their heavenly character, their supernatural claim, men will scoff at their pretensions and ridicule their simplicity. They will admit its utility as a system of natural thought, but will deny its necessity as a law emanating from God.

Can we suppose that Christ would send forth His messengers without the necessary proofs of their commission? No. Along with the command to teach He gave them the power to convince, and practically said to them: "Tell the world that I have sent you, and if they believe you not, show them the seal of divinity which I have placed upon your teaching. The works that I have done, do you also. Call back to the body already in decay the departed soul, and make the dead return to life. Strike from the leper the scales that cover his weak and diseased frame. Command the elements which obey not the voice of man, and control them as your subjects. Bid the winds to cease,

and calm into repose the raging waves of the sea. Bid health return where disease had blasted, and the healthful blood to flow through the arid limbs."

Such things are not in merely human power to work. Nature is subject to God alone, or those whom He has sent. If at the sight of these things they do not recognize that God is with you of a truth, then because of their hardness of heart is grace refused them, and because of their own sin they cannot see the light though it shines brightly before their eyes, or hear the Divine Voice though it resounds in their ears. They who refuse to believe doctrines thus proved seal their own condemnation.

Thus did Christ arm His Apostles for their mission to a world teeming with sin and infidelity, gifting them with His sublime precepts in their hearts, His divine doctrines on their lips, and in their hands the power of miracles to confirm both.

Something in the make-up of what is called the "practical mind" of the day rebels against anything that creates surprise or wonder. And if that same mind is one without faith, then this rebelling spirit brands any cause that asserts a supernatural marvel as undesirable, and therefore impossible. Hence the cause of the denial, especially by men in the present day, of anything of a miraculous nature. Science, so called (though improperly, as it is but a branch of science, namely physical science), has so won the modern intellect to its side that anything that appears to contradict or exceed its laws is set down as a delusion and a mere fiction, capable perhaps of deceiving the illiterate and superstitious, but unworthy of the credence of men of any mental acquirements. As miracles are outside the ordinary motions of nature, as they appear not to harmonize with the working

order of physical laws, they are at once rejected by such minds as wanting in authenticity or veracity, and therefore as no part of true religion. As the religion of Christ attests the reality of such facts, nay, rests upon them as one of its strong supports, and claims to prove its divine nature by their aid, it follows that the destruction of the foundation ruins the edifice, and the man who rejects the possibility of miracles rejects Christianity. The laws of science are drawn from common experience. That a man should rise from the dead is outside, nay, contrary to, our experience. Therein lies the difficulty of believing it.

But let us consider whether miracles are not necessary for the promulgation of revelation.

By revelation we understand the communication of Divine truth from God to man. During the life of Christ on earth He communicated to the world many sublime truths which until then had remained unknown, and would forever have thus remained unless revealed by Him, because they are of their very nature above the comprehension of man. But for this very reason they must appear to the world mere fancies and flights of the imagination unless some proofs which man can see and know are adduced to show their origin and veracity. Conceive then a certain Man in a particular country, some 1900 years ago, rising into public notice and attracting the attention of men to Himself. In appearance He is as other men, exemplifying in Himself the ordinary conditions of human nature. When asked who He is He responds, "I existed before My natural birth, from all eternity. Before the world began to exist I was already in the possession of the glory of God. I am the only-begotten Son of God. By Me was the world made, and the stars were set in their orbits. I, though the reputed son

of a poor carpenter, am King of the Universe, disposing of all as I will, and at My call are millions of angels to minister to Me."

If such a one made this answer, and offered no supernatural proof of the assertion, what would be the inevitable conclusion of sober reason? What else could one say but that His understanding was disordered, that reason had lost its balance, and a dream of unearthly grandeur had filled his fancy? Could He complain if sober, well-thinking men refused to give Him credence? Could He wonder that His words caused only a smile of pity for a poor deluded dreamer? It would not matter that His life was spotless and His character beyond reproach, His actions benevolent and His manner saintly. Who even with all this could prove His sinlessness? That is a matter of the interior, not of appearance. It resides in the soul, and can often be counterfeited externally without the presence of the reality. Moreover the goodness of an action, even when entirely interior, depends upon the motive, and that must always be hidden from human eyes. The same language which Christ used against the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites and whitened sepulchres, might have been uttered by an ordinary mortal who mixed human frailty with emotion. Is it not evident, therefore, that if Christ merely asserted the doctrines of the new law without any confirming supernatural proofs its Divine authority could never have been proved? But when to the doctrines He preached He set the confirmatory seal of God; when to prove His power of forgiving sins He restored health to the palsied man; when to illustrate the truth of the resurrection of the body He brought Lazarus again to life; when to prepare the people's minds for the doctrine of the Eucharist He multi-

plied the loaves and fishes, then were the truths He uttered irresistible; then shines out in all its splendor the power of the Divinity in Him who wrought them; then did they gain undeniable credence in the minds of men; then in a word must the mind and heart and intellect bow before them, because such deeds God alone could perform, and then only in confirmation of what is in itself true. A mere assertion may come from man; but its proof by miracles is from God alone. A creed that comes from human lips cannot compel the credence of humanity; but when all nature bends in humble obedience before Him who proclaims it; when the unruly elements are subject to His bidding, when inorganic nature, not ordinarily amenable to man's mere word, flies in haste to do His will, and as if forgetting its lifeless and irrational condition, hears and obeys as if instinct with life and reason, then what man can refuse credence to such a tongue? What mind less irrational than brute nature can hesitate to yield submission? What intelligence can withhold its fealty? What heart can refuse its homage? What nation debar the progress of His teaching? What people refuse entrance to His law? What King Herod, foolish in his own conceits, childish in his own craftiness, can stay the irresistible march of His revelation? No! A doctrine attested by the aid of miracles is unconquerable because necessarily divine; irrepressible, because from heaven. It must advance step by step, never flagging, never yielding, like some tremendous avalanche that starting from the Alpine height moves on and down slowly but irresistibly, bearing with it in its course whatever would impede its progress. Where upon the earth is the man so rash as to climb the steep passes of the mountain gorge, and brandishing in air a puny

weapon, cry to that icy mass, "Halt! I command you to cease your progress"? The only answer he would receive would be the echo of his own voice, flung back as if in ridicule by the opposing cliffs, "Cease your progress!" If he persists in defying the mass, he too will be borne down and crushed to atoms beneath its weight. So, too, the Church founded by Christ must go on throughout the world until the end of time. Her doctrines attested by the direct interposition of God's power and majesty demand the consent of mankind and the submission of the intelligence and will. Blessed are they who yielding to their power and influence, are united to that eternal band of believers that is called the Church. But woe, eternal woe, to those who like Arius and Voltaire, filled with the empty conceit of their own superior intelligence and knowledge, dare to stand in opposition to its advance. The very truths of Christianity bear upon their face the evident marks of the divine; their influence as seen in those who obey them appeals to every reasonable mind as proof of their godly origin, and if neither of these is sufficient, then behold, God has interposed Himself by miracles and deeds of wonder to render irresistible testimony of their supernatural birth. Thus, then, did Christ send forth His Apostles, weak and unlettered men it is true, but for that reason precisely all the more fit to convince the world of the authenticity of their sublime mission. Thus, too, their successors have gone forth, in all times since then, bearing with them the same awful powers as they; not only to preach and teach, but, when God has deemed it necessary and expedient, to compel the powers of nature to confirm their word. Those who would fain deny the miracles of Christ cannot deny those of a St. Gregory

and a St. Francis Xavier, or else they must deny all history and refuse to believe all human testimony of the past.

Thus from its simple beginning in Galilee, aided by God's power, the little band to whom Christ addressed the words, Go and preach, have gathered together in holy union all the nations of the earth. Thus have their preaching and their works spread among the races of men the holy peace of Christ's Gospel. Happy they who hear those words of comfort and consolation. Thrice happy they who subject themselves to the sweet yoke of His commandments. For they, too, will share in the miracles of His sacred ministry. What is conversion to grace but the raising of the dead to life? What is the banishing of sin from their souls but casting out of devils? By God's grace such miracles as these are in the power of each of us. To such a ministry must each one of us aspire, that we may be to the world witnesses of the faith that is in us and, like the external miracles of the Apostles, convincing proofs of the presence of God in our souls.

CONFESSION

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee. — MATT. ix, 2.

BY the roadside in the town of Capharnaum a poor man lies helpless upon a litter. Death has half claimed him already, for his limbs are powerless, for paralysis has deprived them of the power of action. The man looks almost as if life had already vanished. But as the sound of approaching voices falls upon his ears, he strains his eyes to catch a glimpse of Him of whose pity for human ills he had heard so much, and as He sees Him at last a tremor of joy passes over that weak frame, and a new light of hope, of confidence, illumines his pallid face. His friends carry him upon the litter to the top of the house, and urged by the sick man's pressing appeals hasten to let him down through the roof at the feet of Jesus. There he lies trembling as between Life and Death, waiting for the word that would restore him to health and happiness. Jesus looks around upon the multitude that throng about Him, and then His eyes rest upon the sick man. Upon the faces of all He sees depicted trust and supplication. His tender heart is touched with pity; and gazing with the vision of God beyond the weak, helpless body before Him, and for the time ignoring it in the presence of a greater need, He looks into the very soul of the sick man, and first attends to and heals the superior nature, uttering the words which to the

sick man were astonishing, to the crowd a mystery, and to the scribes a scandal. "Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee." The sick man, feeling already in his heart the supreme joy of divine grace, which at the words of Christ had entered his soul, thought now no more of his bodily ailments. To him now the action of Christ was clear. He had granted him a greater boon when he had asked a lesser one. The bystanders, experiencing none of this, heard the words with astonishment, mingled with disappointment. The multitude is always looking for wonders. It is not unlikely that some of them felt more curiosity to see a miracle performed than desire for the recovery of the sick man. To many of them, no doubt, the sudden restoration to health of the paralytic would only mean a wonderful exhibition of some mysterious power. But Christ, who never wrought a miracle but for the purpose of conveying some spiritual teaching which the miracle would impress more deeply, deferred for a moment the visible healing of the body to teach them a more important lesson that He was first of all the physician of the soul. Hence he says first, not "Arise and walk," but, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." But among the multitude that pressed around Him there were not only the curious, but the malicious, the scribes who followed Him from place to place, not to profit by His teaching, not to learn of Him the lessons of heavenly wisdom which dropped from His lips, but to entrap Him, and to discover in his speech some declaration that would be an open contradiction of the law. And now at last do they fancy that He has committed Himself? For was it not written in the law, was it not preached in the synagogues and in the Temple, that God alone forgives sins? Here was a man who proclaimed publicly that He pos-

sessed that power. Could a man be God? "This man blasphemeth," they said within themselves. But Christ reading their thoughts confronted them with this question, "Which is easier to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' or 'Arise and walk'? Does not one as well as the other require a divine power? If, then, God has given me power to work miracles, or if I by divine power can perform works which are out of the order of nature, why do you accuse me of blasphemy when I use a power which of itself though more divine in its results is nevertheless no more difficult?" Then as a proof of the Divinity that was in Him, as testimony to His power of remission of sin, He performed the miracle before their eyes, and the paralytic arose cured in body and soul.

"This man blasphemeth. How can man forgive sin?" Even to-day from those around us we hear the same expressions of doubt, when the Church claims for her priests this tremendous power. My object to-day is not to deal with the question of the remission of sins controversially. Perhaps there is no other doctrine of the Catholic Faith that stands on such solid foundation, so far as argumentative proof goes, as the Sacrament of Penance. The Latin Church has ever believed in it, and all the Eastern Churches, even those which are separated from us by schism; nay, in more recent times, even those who differ from us in faith profess their belief in it, so plain is it that all the Fathers of the Early Church recognize it as a chief dogma of the Christian Faith.

I will not detain you by any lengthy interpretation of the plain words of Christ, which need no interpreter, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." Can

man forgive sin? Of himself as man, no; for, as sin is an offense against God primarily and essentially, no man as man can blot out that which God has recorded of man's deeds. But as a minister of God, what is there to hinder? It is in God's power to forgive sins as He chooses. He is the offended One. He therefore can remit the guilt of the offense in whatever way He chooses. He may do it directly if He chooses. But it has not been God's method of dealing with man by personal and direct intercourse, for who could look upon His face and live? It is God's way to deal with man through intermediate agents, either by Angels or by man, or even by some material creature. These He makes His ministers, His instruments to work for man whatever He has designed for him in the order of grace. In the Old Law we read constantly of Angels being sent to various people bearing tidings to them of God's will; bearing to some the blessing of health; to others an assurance of God's pleasure; to others the announcement of sins forgiven. But in the New Law, God wished to elevate the humanity sanctified and regenerated by His Son to the high rank of celestial ambassador; and so in the new dispensation, not Angels, but men carry the tidings of the King, bring the benedictions of heaven, and announce the forgiveness of sins. Can man forgive sin? Why not, if God has constituted him the representative of Himself empowered to do so. The same God who gives to a drop of water poured on the head in Baptism the power to cleanse the soul, can He not, if He so wills, give even to man, whose nature Christ assumed, and still glorifies at the right hand of God the Father, a power similar to that which even inanimate nature may receive?

We know, therefore, that God may if He choose constitute man His deputed minister in the remission of sins. We know that He has given this power in the commission which Christ gave to the Apostles and through them to the bishops and priests of the Church. Who, therefore, shall say of one thus delegated that he "blasphemeth"?

But I do not purpose speaking to you to-day of the question whether or not this power exists in the Church. With us who already believe it does the point is to avail ourselves of its graces, to realize its benefits, and partake of the peace it imparts. O blessed peace! Where but in this sacrament is it to be found in the whole world? Look where you will, there is naught but deception, inquietude, remorse. Go where you may, you meet only disorder, anxiety. Ah, there is but one place in the world where the soul, tossed upon the waves of sin and remorse, can really hear again the words addressed to the penitent Magdalen, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." It is at the sacred tribunal of Penance; placed upon the frontier which separates the regions desolate in disorder from the peaceful valleys of the Kingdom of God; where earth and heaven seem to meet, and where Mercy and Truth are met together, and Justice and Peace embrace. It is indeed the sanctuary where God places upon the forehead of the humble penitent His crown of Pardon, and bidding him be of good cheer, sends him back into the world to battle against vice and iniquity.

Who that has been rescued from the gnawing remorse of a guilty conscience by its holy influence needs to be convinced of its salutary influence? Who that has come there laden with the guilt of dark crime and secret sin,

and has there, before the minister of God, avowed it all, and, casting it from him, has arisen with light heart and strong will, needs to be argued into the belief that there is the mercy and love of God felt most palpably, and in such a way that one almost feels the loving presence of Christ saying again, "Arise, thy sins are forgiven thee"? When a man has been dragged down to the lowest depths of shame and degradation, and looking about almost in despair for something to cling to, at the moment when the fearful abyss of eternal ruin seems to gape at his feet, and has found his way at last to that quiet confessional and met a true friend in his need, and has come forth a new man, with a new view of life, with a new light in his eyes, and a new hope in his soul; ask such a one whether he believes Christ has established this sacrament, and he will answer, Who but Christ would? Who but Christ could? Where but in the Church of Christ can such help and consolation be found?

This it certainly is, my friends, and under this aspect — as a consolation and source of strength — I wish to speak to-day of confession.

If there is anything that men value in life, if there is anything which men seek for, it is some friend in whom they may confide. There are times when it would seem that men prefer even death itself to being longer compelled to dwell alone with some secret in their heart. Do we not often hear of men giving themselves up to justice and severe punishment, preferring anything rather than the suffering and anguish which their secret entails? Is it not the greatest sign of love and affection when one confides to another the secret story of his life, good and bad as it is? Who can tell the anguish of him who looks

about in vain for such a friend? Ah, he will find many who wish to be considered friends. The world is full of those, who smile and salute you; but you know there is in their hearts no real sympathy for you. You look around for some one who will listen to your story, who will understand, who will help you: where is he to be found? Who cares for you enough to waste his time hearing your sorrow or shame? Each one is so burdened with his own that he has no time left for others. If you should at last gain a patient hearing, are you sure you would not be laughed at for your scrupulosity, or despised for your wickedness? Are you sure that if something happened to-morrow to turn this friend into an enemy that your secret would not be published to the world as a testimony against you? We all know that in the world even the fastest friends do not confide their secrets to each other, especially those very secrets which weigh most upon them and which they desire most to share with another.

In the midst of all this shallowness and fickleness is the poor sinner to be allowed to yearn in vain for a true friend? If Christ loved sinners so much surely He must have provided for this great want which every repentant sinner feels. And so He has. Turn to the confessional. There you will find the friend you seek. There you will find in God's minister one who not only will listen to you patiently, and give you his time as liberally as you choose, but who yearns for your confession and will assist you to make it, encouraging and aiding you in your timidity and shame to tell all, to unbosom yourself of all, especially the worst you have to say, the most shameful you have committed. By God's grace too he not only hears you patiently, nay eagerly, but with true sympathy. For the grace of his ministry aids him to place himself in just rapport with those

who seek his confidence. If he be an Augustine who sits there in the confessional he sympathizes with the penitent, seeing in the confession of the poor sinner at his feet only a repetition of his own weaknesses, his own former shortcomings, from which by God's grace he has been permitted to arise a conqueror. If it be an Aloysius pure and unspotted from contamination with the world, then again he sympathizes because he knows full well that were it not for God's all-saving grace he too would lie where the sinner now is, and deeper too. In the confessional, then, the sinner finds patience and sympathy. But more still, he is sure of eternal silence; of a silence that from its unbroken observance seems to be an argument itself of the divinity of this Sacrament. For in all the history of the Church it has never been known that a secret revealed in confession has been betrayed. There have been Judases that have betrayed their Lord and his spouse the Church, but never has one of them been known to open his lips to divulge a secret guarded by the vow of perpetual silence.

Nay more, history records instances where the priest has met death boldly and unflinchingly rather than reveal the secret confided to him and God alone. Behold here, then, the reason why so many thousands recognize the peace to be obtained by the Sacrament of Penance. Behold why men whisper here into the ears of the priest that which they would never reveal to their dearest friends. Behold why the child tells here in fullest and frankest confidence that which he would never consent to reveal to father or mother.

This it is that begins the great work which this Sacrament was instituted to accomplish. The first step towards conversion is the knowledge of our own wickedness, and the willingness to acknowledge it. Add to this the deep sorrow which fills our souls, the sense of utter unworthi-

ness which follows at the sight of our own enormities, and which, directed by the experienced wisdom of the confessor, fits us to receive the pardon of God.

Then the encouraging words of the priest who tells us of the great love that God bears us, and narrates to us again the story of the penitent Magdalen, and recalls to our minds the Cross upon which Christ the Saviour died for us that we might live ; till our hearts are filled at once with deepest sorrow for the past and firm resolution for the future, and together penitent and confessor mingle their prayers to heaven, and finally are heard the consoling words of pardon which are ratified in heaven and give joy to the Angels of God, — "I, by the power committed to me as a priest of God, absolve thee from thy sin." A joy seizes upon the soul, than which no pleasure is purer, no enjoyment fuller in the whole range of earthly pleasure and enjoyment. For it is the peace of God descending into that soul, which before had been tortured by unrest and remorse. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding and can be experienced only by the repentant sinner, as he comes forth leaving behind him all the sin and sorrow that once burdened his soul.

I speak to those who know that all that I say is true. I rather choose to put before your souls that which your own hearts have experienced than to bring forward dogmatic proofs of what you already believe. Why, then, should one suffer the pangs of a guilty conscience, the sting of remorse, the gnawing at the soul of the enemy of peace when in the same tribunal we may acknowledge to God our weakness and misery, gather strength and consolation from the words of advice and counsel that are there offered to us, and happiness beyond expression in the sweet knowledge that our sins are blotted out and our

iniquities forgiven. Avail yourselves, my brethren, of this saving remedy while yet you may. It is the evil one who tempts you by suggesting that it is too humiliating for human nature. When the disease is pernicious and deep seated, strong remedies are necessary. When the bullet has entered deep into some vital part, the probing must be painful. But when the disease is routed and the wound is healed then come the glory and pleasure of sound health. Be courageous. Better to humble ourselves now, where no one but God and his minister can know our humiliation, than wait until before the judgment seat of God, before all the peoples of the earth, before those who thought well of us and those who never suspected us of wrong, the eternal Judge, from whose eyes no sin can remain hidden, will turn to us His angry face, and the eyes of all in heaven and on earth behold our shame and degradation. Let us rather judge ourselves severely now that upon that day we may hear not the sentence of eternal loss, but of everlasting peace.

INTEMPERANCE

A FEW days ago the report ran over the wires, and flew from mouth to mouth, that a ship, arriving in one of our ports from a foreign shore, carried aboard some passengers who were victims of that awful disease, the cholera. Instantly all over the land there arose a cry of alarm. The municipal authorities assembled to take measures against the danger of transmitting the disease. Eminent physicians were consulted as to the means best calculated to ward off infection, and nothing was left undone that might be supposed to secure the continuance of public health. It was but just that they whose duty it was to guard the public from any calamity should have been most vigilant lest the slightest inroad might be made upon their cities by so insidious and fatal an enemy.

We live in the midst of a malady compared to which the cholera, awful as it is in itself, frightful as are its effects, is but as the soft, gentle breeze to the whirlwind that tears the trees out from the earth by the roots and flings them crashing through the air, — rent, stripped of their foliage, useless but to burn. Men hear of the unfortunate victims of cholera falling down lifeless, as if stricken by a bolt from heaven, and the blood runs cold in their veins, and the sweat of terror stands out in drops upon their faces, as they even think of it. But drunkenness strikes its victims before their very eyes; they see them stagger and drop and writhe and gasp, and die before their very eyes, and they pass them by and think of it no more. But God's Church, the tender, watchful mother, to whom

He has entrusted the care of His children, may not go silently by, content to drop a tear of pity upon the drunkard's grave, the grave of another lost to her forever, the grave of one more who has heartlessly, cruelly exchanged the sacred cup wherein lies the Precious Blood of Christ for the false, lying glass whose draught has sent him reeling headlong into hell for all eternity. Woe to her if she says peace, peace, when there is no peace. Woe to her if she fails to raise her voice in holy warning, even though all the world stop its ears, for fear of hearing what she must in duty say. And woe to them who profit nothing by her warnings. Too late they will cry, "Lord save me. I perish."

No man with any spark of feeling in his heart, with any little sympathy for the miserable of his race, can look unmoved upon the calamities, the poverty, the broken hearts, the shattered frames, the wretched homes that follow in the wake of drunkenness, and not strive in some way to open the eyes of its deluded victims to the great mistake they are making by their over-indulgence in drink. No man who sees all this can keep silent as he beholds the little children pinched and hungry, the wife weak and faint, the home cold and cheerless, because the hard-earned money that should go for their support is squandered for drink. Every day the drunkard is implored to open his eyes to the extravagance of his vice; to the worldly foolishness of drink; to the economy and worldly wisdom of temperance. And it is proper that this phase of the question should be placed vividly before him.

But the priest of God has a mission to perform that reaches far, far beyond the realm of mere social economy. To him the smallest part of the innumerable results of any vice is the mere social inconvenience, the temporal

misfortunes, the bodily wretchedness which the commission of a sin entails. To him the soul is all. His heart is touched with pity as any other man's at the sight of all these corporal ills; but under the ragged, tattered garments, the trembling, diseased, reeling body, his eye penetrates by the light of faith to the soul of the drunkard, — that soul that bears upon it the image and likeness of an all-Holy God; that soul over which Christ wept in His terrible agony in Gethsemane; that soul to ransom which He hung outstretched between earth and heaven, a bleeding Victim to man's ingratitude; that soul for which now blackened by the sin of drink Jesus its God suffered the pangs of an unspeakable thirst; that soul to save which He died. It is the soul that God's minister beholds wrecked and ruined; it is the soul that he beholds starving, weak, and diseased; it is the soul that is upon the brink of an eternity of despair, to which he stretches out his hands imploringly, and cries in tones of agonizing entreaty, "In God's name, stop. Hell is at your feet. Behold the temporal misery that you have brought upon you by drink; but behold more especially the eternal misery, the ruin that you have brought upon your soul, that misery which now threatens to be everlasting damnation."

It is precisely to speak to you of these moral effects of intemperance, these results upon the soul, the higher nature, the superior part of man, and its eternal destiny, that I have come before you to-night, a Catholic priest speaking the doctrine of the Church to her own children. The Church, like her Divine Founder, though not unmindful of man's temporal welfare, has yet always before her eyes, not the mere convenience or economy of things temporal, but their bearing upon right and wrong,

upon God's law, upon eternity. Hence, after having heard last night of the effects of drink as a social and civil evil, you are called upon to consider the great moral destruction that follows in the wake of intemperance.

There is one small word that embraces in its signification everything that contradicts the law of God. That word is sin. Whatever act reverses the order established by the supreme wisdom of the Divinity; whatever action disturbs the peace and harmony of the spiritual edifice reared by His hands; whatever action violates the eternal covenant which He has made with man, — that action, that contradiction, that violation, we call sin. Intemperance — drunkenness — does all this, and it seems to-day to be the strongest and most effectual ally of Satan, which like an adder stealthily creeps into man's heart, and coiling its repulsive body around the soul, chills it with its icy touch, and gnaws it with its venomous fangs until life and warmth are gone forever. It is a sin and a habit full of evils peculiar to itself, horrible in their effects, merciless in their consequences, — consequences apparently more fatal and widespread than any others with which at present we have to deal.

Assembled here in God's temple, where the Holy Spirit hovers, before the altar whereon Jesus Christ in person dwells, let us face the truth like men. Here in the clear light of reason and of faith let us look on this vice as it is. Let us strip the question of every disguise; let reason alone rule, and if we are by God's grace still unbound, unfettered by the vice of drink, let us learn to love the virtue of temperance the more, and bind ourselves to its observance. But if within the secret chambers of your soul a voice whispers to you of past errors against this law, of

days that were to you as hideous nights, of times of horrible weakness and misfortune, periods when every manly faculty and better instinct were bound and imprisoned, and the brute nature ruled over you, and black and passionate hell ran wild within you, choking each Christian sentiment, stifling each motion of grace, paralyzing each half-awakened sense of duty, times when God seemed dead and Satan God ; if even now there rise before your memory recollections how you once stood on the brink of the whirlpool dizzied, though by the grace and favor of God you did not cast yourself in, then let the horror that comes with it and the remembrance of your escape be a theme of perpetual thanksgiving to Almighty God and a constant warning of what without His Grace is still possible for you.

The first consequence, then, peculiar to the vice of drunkenness is the insult offered to the infinite Majesty of God by the utter self-debasement of His own image. All that we behold around and above us is the handiwork of God's infinite power. By one word He caused the forces of nature, inanimate objects, vegetable and animal life, to spring into existence. Let it exist, He said, and behold, the command is executed. Finally, in the great plan of Creation man came the last. The Holy Scripture narrates the creation of man as though it were the outcome of deep consideration on the part of the Holy Trinity when God said to Himself, Let us make man according to our own image and likeness. When from the slime of the earth animated by the breath of God man came forth, upon his soul was stamped the image of the Divinity. Man alone of all terrestrial creation could lift his face towards heaven, and recognize the dignity of his nature. In him alone reason held

sway, and by virtue of that reason, because of his intelligence and will, he stood upon the earth its lord and master, the noblest work of God's creation. In man God finds His greatest glory; in him He sees the fullest realization of His power; in him He beholds the image of Himself, and He loves it, for it is divine and immortal.

Now comes the vice of drink, and behold its work. Once well seated in the soul of its victim, it turns defiant, like some enraged demon, to the Almighty, and says to Him, "Behold this man. Him Thou hast delighted to honor by making him after Thine own image. Thou lovest him with an infinite tenderness because in him reason is mistress. But I will destroy what Thou hast created. I will obliterate from his soul every vestige of similitude to Thee. I will stamp out of his very being whatever there is of superiority to the brute, and when again Thou lookest upon him I defy Thee to recognize in the wreck anything worthy of Thine hands, anything which can do Thee honor, anything which can draw even from Thine infinite Goodness one spark of love, one breath of affection. Thou hast created him lord of the earth; behold, I will make him the slave of the beast. By the pouring of baptismal water Thou hast made him Thy child, Thy much-loved son. But see, into that same body I pour the poison of this glass, and behold the transformation; he is the child of Satan and Thy worst enemy. Thou hast raised him up to heaven, I will debase him down to hell. Thou hast made him a little less than the Angels, I will make him a little lower than the demons. Thou hast given him a Guardian to guide and keep him in peace and safety, but I will fill his soul with foul spirits that will hiss and laugh him

into madness and insanity. Almighty God, Thou art the Creator of man, but I, drunkenness, intemperance, am his destroyer."

This demon begins his work. Behold its victim as he reels forth from the bar-room. Behold the drunkard! Where is the image of God in that being? He has sacrificed it upon the bar, the altar of Satan. Where is reason? Fled! he is unable to conceive one thought. Where is his power of speech, — privilege of man alone? He cannot form a single word. Where is his will? Where are his affections? Where is his freedom? A child could, with its finger, cast him reeling upon the pavement, and he would be as powerless to resist as an inanimate block of wood. The very dogs that pass him as he lies there lifeless in the gutter can bark and run, but he, this man, once image of God, can neither speak nor move. O God, I will not insult Thee by calling this Thy image; it is no longer the man, but the brute that lies there drunk, insensible with intoxicating drink. Tell me, my friends, is not intemperance your foulest enemy, since it can thus degrade, thus debase your very soul and every faculty of your reason? Tell me what sin offers such an insult to God our Creator, our Universal Father, as this of drunkenness, that undoes the proudest of His works, and defiles the image of His glory? Tell me what mercy can he expect who having in his power the likeness of the all Holy God deliberately, of his own free act, plunges it down to the very depths of the cesspool of mire and filth of human rottenness, and holds it there until it putrefies, and is effaced forever?

This is the sin of intemperance as regards God, the Creator. Now let us see its results with respect to God the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Not content with making us men like unto Himself, to prove His love for us, He went to the utmost possibility of His power when He, the Infinite, made Himself like unto us. Not content with raising man up to heaven, God abased Himself to such a degree as to come down to earth. We believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God; that He took upon Himself our nature, a body like ours, a soul like ours. Christ became our brother, and because original sin had weakened our humanity and led us away from heaven our home, He, the innocent one, was led like a lamb to the slaughter. Up the stony heights of Calvary He crept weak, and weary, laden with the sins of the world, the scapegoat of all mankind, and there was nailed upon the bitter Cross and raised between earth and heaven, a sacrifice to God for every sin committed in the world. Down that Cross rolled drop by drop that Sacred Blood, that was by the ministry of the Sacraments of His Church to wash white again the souls of men, however blackened by guilt and iniquity. By Christ's Incarnation our bodies even took on a similitude with God. As by the touch of His humanity upon the waters of Jordan He sanctified the waters of the whole earth, so by the presence of His Divinity in His sacred humanity He dignified every human Body and made them all temples of the Holy Spirit. To our bodies even, therefore, we owe respect and honor, since even God has honored them in the Incarnation. He who degrades his own flesh and blood insults the Redeemer; he who dishonors his body dishonors Christ, dishonors that Body that was assumed from Mary; that Body that hung on Calvary; that Body that rose glorious from the tomb; that Body, that sacred humanity, that sits in glory triumphant at the Right Hand of God in Heaven.

The drunkard defiles his humanity, degrades his body, drags down to the vipers that crawl upon the earth his own flesh and blood, and therefore dishonors and insults the Flesh and Blood of the Son of God.

But beyond all this there is an effect of drunkenness when it becomes a well-rooted habit, that makes it more awful than almost any other sin.

Jesus Christ came down from heaven and brought with Him God's mercy and pardon for sin. There is no sin so black that God cannot forgive. His Goodness, like His power, is infinite. It is His delight to exercise His goodness upon the sinful souls of poor fallen men. Show me the man who has spent the bloom of his youth in iniquity and evil-doing. As he lies upon his death-bed his eyes are opened to the peril of his soul; he repents bitterly for his sins; he cries to God for mercy and is saved. Another is suddenly stricken down almost in the act of offending God by some crime against His law, but even in that last moment if he stretches out his hands in penitent agony and cries, "God have mercy upon my soul," it may be that God will hear his cry like that of the penitent thief, and his soul may be saved for all eternity; for God's grace is instantaneous. Only our will is necessary to make it efficacious. The murderer, stricken in his very act of killing, can cry for mercy. The robber, in the very midst of his misdeeds, can call for forgiveness; and if that penitence be real, God's goodness will not be wanting.

But there is one sin before which, if death comes while it still holds possession of a man, God himself is powerless; the hands of His Mercy are tied, and no power can loose them — intemperance. The dying drunkard, the intemperate man taken in his sin, has little

chance for repentance. He alone has the power to stop short the Goodness and Mercy of God Himself. Not all the sacraments that Christ instituted, not all the priests consecrated by His Holy Church, not all the sufferings of all the Saints, not all the prayers of the all-powerful Mother of God, nay, not all the Blood of God Himself, can save the man who is dying, drunk, with the sin of intemperance upon his soul and without the power to ask forgiveness even with his last breath. He has placed himself beyond even the far-reaching hand of God's forgiveness. His last action has been an insult to His Redeemer. His last breath is but a curse upon the God that made him. He closes his eyes upon earth with an oath on his lips, and he opens them the next instant to an eternity of punishment. Jesus Christ redeemed the world; but this man has held up his hands to God and swore he would not be redeemed. Jesus Christ his Redeemer stands over him ready with His Precious Blood to wash away every stain upon his soul; but he thrusts it away from him, and dies without one sigh, one look, one tear, one wish for forgiveness. There is but one sin that Christ has said can never be forgiven in this world or in the next. The drunkard, dying stupefied by drink, commits that sin, and for him redemption is impossible.

There are many awful consequences of intemperance. There are many sins that come in the train of drunkenness. Impurity, with all its vile associations; blasphemy, the slanderer of God; dishonesty, the ruiner of all conscience; irreligion, the foster-mother of immorality. But of all the results that follow in its frightful wake, there is none so irremediable, so annihilating, so utterly beyond hope as this — *final impenitence!*

I was called once to the death-bed of a drunkard.

He was raving from the effects of his intemperance. He was a victim of that criminal insanity, *delirium tremens.* I knelt by his bedside and prayed to God that if only for a moment he might regain consciousness that I might administer to him the last rites of the Church. I waited long, and still he raved. Oath upon oath he screamed out wildly, as in his crazed fancy he beheld the visions of hell and its denizens. At last he quieted, and as I called his name, he looked towards me, and I could see that reason had returned; and then with all the force of words I could muster, with appeals to remember the mercy of Christ his Saviour, with entreaties to reflect upon the approach of death, with supplications to consider the awful anger of God, I implored him for the sake of his poor soul to say that he was sorry for his sin, to make his peace with God, and die at least penitent. I waited, trembling, for an answer. This was his reply: "When I want a priest I will send for him. I want no mercy, no forgiveness. Leave me." As I left the house, he started up from the bed, uttered a piercing cry, and fell dead upon the floor, at the feet of his poor, broken-hearted wife.

His body was buried in unconsecrated ground, but his soul, God alone can tell where that is.

You are Christians assembled here to-night. You hear my words and know that they are true. They are not merely the philanthropist's; they are the words of God's minister calling out to you to open your eyes to the dangers that beset you. As you walk the thoroughfares of our cities and run the gauntlet of bar-rooms on both sides let these thoughts come up before your mind, and preserve you from temptation. Your watchword must be "Temperance." If you cannot be temperate men

in the proper use of anything, whatever it may be, then, in God's name, abstain from it entirely. For many, total abstinence is the only safeguard of temperance. Each man knows his weakness, and knowing it must use those means best calculated to make him strong against it. Think of the drunkard's death. Resolve by God's grace it shall never be yours. Resolve to-night that you will never put yourself in the possibility of standing outside the limits of God's mercy whatever may be the sacrifice you must make to ensure it. Promise to-night here before God's altar that you will never degrade His image in your soul by drink. Promise to-night that you will never by the vice of intemperance insult the Humanity of Jesus Christ your Saviour. Promise to-night that you will never by the sin of drunkenness render useless the spilling of His Blood for you. Promise to-night that you at least will never be found at the hour of death with the foul stench of drunkenness on your breath, an oath upon your lips, and the foretaste of hell in your soul. Promise this to-night upon your knees, and may God bless you as you do, and give you the strength to be sober men the rest of your lives.

THE UNJUST STEWARD

Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward. — LUKE xvi, 2.

READ the parable in to-day's gospel through and you will recognize at once in this unfaithful steward a type of the selfish man. Selfishness first leads him to pride; forgetting that he is but steward he assumes the position of master. Pride leads him to avarice, avarice to dishonesty, and dishonesty to ruin. Appointed to a high position by his master, he feels no sense of gratitude. He seems not to recognize that there are numbers of servants besides himself who are anxious to fill his position, any of whom his master might have chosen. No, he forgets what we all lose sight of at times, that whatever our station in life may be, if we were gone from it to-morrow the world would move on just the same, and in a short time we should never be missed. Instead of faithfully discharging all the duties of his office, he takes mean advantage of the trust his master places in him, and turns to his own profit the goods entrusted to his care. But he meets at last the fate of all of his kind. He becomes suspected. He is accused. The time comes for an examination of his accounts, and he is detected.

Meanwhile his craft and duplicity, perfected by long experience, point the way to another refuge, when the present is gone. Sure of his discharge from his old employment, he buys a new one by what would be called a stroke of policy, and makes for himself new friends by a liberal donation of somebody else's money. How

true is the picture to life! Which of us, in these days of defaulting cashiers and political swindlers, does not recognize an indication of the Divine Wisdom speaking unerringly in this delineation of the man who makes self-aggrandizement his only principle? What is the motto of our so-called "successful business man"? "Look out for number one!" Look out, not only that, using such honest means as every prudent man must, he be not handicapped in the race for honorable success; but look out for any possible chance, honest or dishonest, which may serve his ends and turn the tide of fortune to his door. "Look out for number one" has its allowable meaning. Self-preservation is natural and just. But it has its wrong, and most usual, meaning; which is opposed to every dogma of Christian teaching, every principle of moral order, and even to man's prosperity, both temporal and eternal. In this sense it is destructive of every social virtue; it is subversive of every human law. It is the curse of the family, and is the cankerworm that gnaws into the very heart of the country. It has made many a man rich, but it has made him accursed by those thousands whom his riches have made poor. The suffering and wretchedness of thousands here in our own land point to that motto and cry in tones that must make the swindler and the dishonest usurer miserable in their wealth of gold. Behold the work of selfishness! False economists may raise new theories to explain this. Theories — views! People cannot eat them; they cannot wear them. Theories will not feed their little ones crying for bread. We of the Church have no need of views or suppositions. We live by certainty of principle; and the principle that must permeate the world, and regenerate mankind, ere oppressed humanity can be relieved, is the

Godlike principle of Justice, of Christian Charity — of the love for one another that Christ our Master commands to every man. Fill the public places with theorists and visionaries, fill the air with clamorous speeches and the mountains and valleys with the eloquent sound of sonorous periods and balanced sentences, and then wait; the echo dies, and the world is just as it was before. But let one spark of Christian Charity, of Godlike, brotherly love, light up for an instant the souls of men, and behold the transformation. The sea of ice melts and flows in sparkling rivulets, free, limpid, unimpeded, mingling in holy harmony and peaceful unity. When man has learned that divine law of love of his neighbor as himself; when he has not only learned by heart but practices the teachings of our Holy Church; when the rich become honest and the poor just; when the millionaire and the laborer both use the goods of nature and of art as trusty stewards; when squandering shall be recognized as a crime and sharp trading as dishonesty, then will the elements of society fall into proper place, then will unity spring from disorder, then will the different classes, like the objects in the kaleidoscope, form one beautiful picture pleasant to look upon, beautiful to the eye of God and man.

Man of the world, remember that you are but a steward of God, — steward of the health you enjoy; steward of the success you have achieved; steward of the enjoyments you seek; steward of money that you hold; steward most of all of your soul, your reason, your intellect, your will! Have a care! They are yours to use, to enjoy, to do good with. But for useless waste, for sinful neglect of any one of these, you will be held responsible before the judgment seat of God, where you shall

hear those words so full of terror to the unfaithful: "Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward." At death's hour the reckoning shall be made. See that your honor is safe at that moment; for what man could look into the face of God for all eternity who was conscious of defrauding Him of His benefits? What man could gaze upon the Divine countenance during those endless years who had proved himself only a swindler and a thief of the Divine benefits? He would hang his head in shame and sorrow and utter against himself his own sentence of condemnation, I cannot live in the overwhelming presence of Him I have betrayed.

There is one fact that must strike any observer of human nature, whether the field of his observation be the recorded history of nations, the biography of men famous in the tale of the world's advance through time, or the practical dealing of man with man in the every-day ordinary commerce of ideas, social and industrial intercourse, and that is, that with exceptions made for individual temperament and character, and all allowances given for the change of particular circumstances, mankind has changed but little since its first creation. Men are singularly alike. Face, and form, and habit, and manner differ; these are but the outward dress, the veneer coating with thin veil the essential humanity beneath. The keen perception of a close observer dives below all that, and reaches the principle that gives activity and individuality to all that which appears without, and that principle is self-consideration. This it is which the men of the earliest and latest times have in common. It is the common trait of poor and rich alike. Selfishness prompted the first sin man ever committed, and

selfishness is the cause of the thousand sins that have been committed while I speak to you. The steward in to-day's gospel is an example of the dishonesty, avarice, and duplicity which are the result of self-seeking and the forgetfulness that we are but keepers, not owners, of the goods that have been put in our charge, material or spiritual.

Happily time is still ours, and we are still God's stewards. Guard well your sacred trust, so that when the accounts are made, the balance shall stand upon our side and God's. To such how welcome beyond all comprehension will be the invitation extended only to the faithful servant: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

THE RESULTS AND LESSONS OF AN ELECTION

The results of an election, whether national, state, or municipal, invariably stir the community to an interesting excitement. The victors smile and the vanquished weep. At once each voter puts forth his theory as to the cause of the results, whether prosperous or unhappy to the particular party to which he owes allegiance. These theories are naturally colored by individual political view, and rarely explain the full truth of the situation. If his party has been sustained by the returns, he ascribes it to the fact that his party alone has proved itself capable of good government. If it has been defeated, then it is due to some mistake of the voters in failing to see where their true interests lie, and in whose hands they may best be trusted. The truth of the matter is, that as a rule the people at large, even though they may, to the mind of the politician, reason illogically, vote with discretion, and, in the main, for the best results. They may not grasp all the endless intricacies of a platform, but the principal issue is generally clear to them; and when the time comes to vote, and they stand in the booth with ballot and pencil in hand, free from the gaze of the stump speaker and the heeler, they mark their little cross against the name of the man that to them best represents the interests of the people. They may disagree in their views of men and parties, but their purpose is identical in the long run, — good government.

This means to them an honest and capable manage-

ment of public affairs, and a rule that at once secures to the country, the state, or the city, further prosperity, healthy industry, and fair compensation for labor. All this is summed up in the popular expression "good times."

Now, it is natural that different heads should harbor different opinions as to which of the great parties best induces and secures these conditions. Association, self-interest, prejudice, ambition are factors that in the field of politics, as in every other, frequently bias sound and cool judgment. But, allowance made for all that, it cannot be questioned that the people as a whole vote for the best interest of the community as they conceive it. No one who has witnessed the results of some of the more recent political contests can doubt that. Let it be suspected that either party in any serious way is responsible for open dishonesty, lack of prosperity, or dull times, and thousands who heretofore have voted that party's ticket will unceremoniously on election day go over to the other side.

The people invariably hold the acting administration at any given time responsible for existing conditions. That may be illogical, but it is the fact. It is the one way left them of making a palpable protest against a wrong condition of things. Who will deny that it is an effectual one, even though sometimes the innocent suffer?

The American public is a patient one. It will sometimes tolerate even open abuses until one wonders whether the public conscience is dead. But it finally becomes clear that it is only sleeping. Eventually it loses patience and arises in its just indignation, and a clean sweep of boodlers, ringleaders, bosses, and machines is the result.

To all, the purity of politics, honesty in public affairs,

and fairness in administration are moral duties. An offense against them is a grievous crime, which sooner or later will bring down its own punishment. To the Catholic, it is a sin, a stain upon his conscience, for which he will surely be held accountable. Whatever others may believe, he knows that there must always be a morality, a law sanctioned by God and religion in public as well as in private life. No amount of usage, no quoting of customs, no alleging of precedents will, before that law, palliate or excuse an offense against the unchangeable decrees. In its best and fullest sense, to him a public office is a public trust. This is the doctrine of his Church, and he knows it, if he knows his religion at all. If he denies the *doctrine*, he is *no* Catholic. If he *fails to practice* it, he is a *bad* Catholic.

For us as Catholic citizens, except under the most pressing and urgent conditions, the religion of a candidate for office is rarely considered. When forced to make a distinction on this ground, the bigotry, prejudice, and intolerable taunting of others are frequently the responsible cause. Catholics are naturally pleased when one of their faith has been elevated to prominence and honor. Why not? But history, local and general, will easily prove that though they are often discriminated against, they seldom discriminate on purely religious grounds. Indeed, most cases seem to prove that between a broad-minded, capable Protestant and a Catholic of even doubtful ability the odds will be in favor of the former. No one can doubt the truth of this who is at all familiar with the inside of local politics.

Again the people are right. Religion, sect, denomination ought never *per se* to be the criterion of any candidate. It never will be for us Catholics unless the nar-

rowness of others compels the issue. We believe and trust that will never happen, notwithstanding the mad ravings of unconstitutional peace-disturbing secret societies.

Meanwhile let us look at home. The man who in any campaign hopes to win Catholic votes because he is a Catholic himself, ought to be made to feel that his hope of sympathy is vain, unless he is Catholic in something more than name, and at other times than during a campaign. It is time we awoke to the fact that the good name of our Holy Church has often suffered at the hands of the so-called Catholic politician. When men who never frequent the Sacraments, seldom are seen at Mass, and are in no way associated with the interests of the Church, go into office by the trick, not seldom successfully played, of announcing what otherwise might require proof, that they are Catholics, those who are gulled by the ruse alone are accountable when later on, by the disgraceful actions of such men who are without conscience or religion, the Church, of which they are supposed to be members, gets all the obloquy which attaches to their dishonest and selfish acts. It is a serious matter thus to dishonor the faith. It has been done before, here and elsewhere, both by the tricky, unprincipled office-seeker and by the unthinking, irresponsible voter. It need not be so. Thank God, there are plenty of men who, if honored by public position, would, by conscientious, careful, capable action, reflect credit on us. There is no lack of such men right here among us. Why are not they chosen alone as the ones who really represent us? If there is to be discrimination at all, suppose we begin to discriminate wisely. There would soon be no room for the campaign Catholic.

THE FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION

OPENING ADDRESS

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. — JOHN xii, 32.

THE pomp and grandeur that surrounds the monarch upon his throne, while it may serve to inspire awe and reverence for the authority it guards, may, and often does, stand as a wall that separates royalty from the people, as an impassable barrier beyond which no man may venture. Therefore the pomp and circumstance of kingly state may more often serve to repel than to attract. Whereas the king, whose interior worth and dignity of soul allows him to doff at times the surroundings of the court and bear himself as one of the family whose head he is, opens wide the avenues of approach, and gives easy access to the petitions and prayers of his people.

The eternal Son of God became man that He might draw men to him. The thunders of Sinai might terrify man and compel obedience, but He wanted their affections, their hearts; and hence He came to live among them.

How must the souls of thousands have been stirred to their depths by the very presence of God in the flesh! But yet thousands remained hard of heart, and looked only from afar, and then with doubting minds, upon the deeds and actions of the reputed son of Joseph the Carpenter. Still men's hearts remained untouched, and still the Sacred Heart craved their allegiance. But gaz-

ing with the eye of His Divinity upon the future, and beholding Himself in the last scene of the awful tragedy of Calvary, maimed and bruised, deserted, raised upon the Cross between earth and heaven, He saw there the remedy for man's coldness. Since He was to level every barrier that might in any way hinder humanity from approaching Him; since He was determined at any cost to show to man that no depth of humiliation was too great a price for the love of His own creatures, then certainly when man would see Him elevated there a mangled Victim, stony, indeed, must be the heart that could still close up the fountains of its affections and pity gazing upon such a scene, upon a God-man suffering for man's sake the most cruel of deaths, shedding the last drop of His Blood that man the sinner might be saved. Truly the Crucifixion was the last weapon of Divine love, the arrow that pierced the stony hearts of humanity. At its sight the Centurion in charge exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!" The story, as it is narrated over and over again, attracts all men to Him who truly prophesied, "I, when I shall be lifted up, shall draw all things to me."

But if this be true of the lifting up of Christ, not upon Thabor in all the glories of His Transfiguration; not from the Sepulchre in all the brightness of His Resurrection, but upon Calvary, in all the depths of humiliation; then here upon the Calvary of the Altar, as Christ is lifted up in even greater humiliation, stripped of every vestige of glory and power, should men's hearts be drawn towards Him.

For surround the Host as we may with every ornament of nature or art, It still enshrines the great mystery of Christ's annihilation, — God under the humblest

elements of human food. If men are attracted by the sight of God's great incomprehensible condescension in taking flesh and suffering for them, how can they arm their hearts against the sight of God, not simply veiling His Divinity under the form of humanity, but veiling both Divinity and Humanity under the form of bread?

We have no time now nor do we need to answer the question of those who say with the incredulous Jews, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" except to say that this Man is God, whose word is truth itself, and by whose power a Virgin became the Mother of God. As the Sacred Host is raised above us, we, like the hundreds of thousands before us, back to that night when the Apostles heard for the first time those wondrous words, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," bow down and adore.

During this devotion we ought to bear in mind that Christ is raised in the Host upon His throne above the tabernacle in reparation and in triumph. How much Christ endures in silent patience in this mystery of the Eucharist! When a boy at Nazareth the scripture tells us that He was subject to Mary and Joseph. In this Sacrament He is subject to thousands not only of those who, like Mary and Joseph, love and adore Him and who would never grieve Him by sin, but also to those who treat Him with black ingratitude and shameful neglect. In the Mass how often must He bear the irreverence and inattention of those who are assembled there seemingly to adore Him? In the communion how often it may be He is placed upon the lips of those who come unworthily to the altar rail, only to add another and a blacker sin of sacrilege to those already committed. How often does He pass through the crowded thorough-

fare in the Viaticum on the way to some dying one, while on all sides there is sin and blasphemy and taking of His own most Sacred Name in vain. Here, as He resides in His prison of the narrow tabernacle, how does He patiently bear the indifference of thousands who pass Him by, forgetful of that Presence, heedless of the voice that still goes forth day and night, to all his people, "Come to me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

During this devotion the Church endeavors to make amends for all this neglect, indifference, and irreverence, and even sacrilege, by surrounding this Sacrament with every sign of honor, reverence, and love.

The devotion is also a triumph.

The Blessed Sacrament is the Sacrament of Sacraments. The Eucharistic Presence of Christ is the very keystone of the Church's system. It is the one dogma about which every other seems to turn and depend. What wonder then if in all ages it has been the object of every attack of the enemies of the Church. What wonder that they have bent every energy in their power to destroy belief in it. What wonder that they have left no argument of blasphemous sophistry unattempted to weaken, if possible, its hold upon the people's minds. The derision, and mockery, and reviling which Christ underwent in the streets of Jerusalem, or when, in the court of Pilate, the soldiers put a crown of thorns upon His head and a reed in His hand and then mockingly bent the knee before Him, saluting Him as king, has been repeated with even madder and more devilish ingenuity through all centuries since by those who turn the very humility and patience of Christ in the Eucharist against Him. But to what avail? Has the Church lost; have the people forgot-

ten their Lord? Let those who think so behold during this holy devotion the communions and the Masses and the fidelity of those who heed the invitation of the Church. Certainly the faith in the Blessed Sacrament was never stronger, or the devotion more ardent, than that which lives in and animates the Church to-day. Such a devotion as this proclaims to the world that Christ in His Sacrament still reigns from the altar-throne and commands the adoration of all the faithful throughout the world. Such a devotion as this stills the whisperings of those who would have men believe that Faith is flagging in the Church. It is the triumph of the Eucharist, the open demonstration that God is still with His Church. She lays before her sacramental Lord the flowers, symbols of love, she surrounds Him with lights, symbols of faith, and she burns before Him the fragrant incense that typifies hopeful prayer and supplication. But what she desires most is the hope and faith and supernatural love of human hearts. Hence she invites her children during this devotion to come and kneel before this Sacrament and make reparation by their prayers for all the insults and offenses offered either by themselves or by others to Christ in the Eucharist that they may be allowed to satisfy by their particular devotion for the apathy and hostility of those who by their conduct continually offend and pain the Sacred Heart of Christ.

Our duty, therefore, is plain at this time. Let it not be recorded reproachfully of us, as of those to whom Christ first came in the flesh, — "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." Think and remember what you profess to believe. Adore, love, and serve Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. As you kneel here in silence before His Sacramental Presence, remember that it was by Him

you were created. Offer your existence to Him to preserve, as He created it. It was by Him you were redeemed. Thank Him for your freedom, and for the eternal right to Heaven which He has purchased for you. It was by the shedding of His Precious Blood that you have the Church and Sacraments through which by grace your soul is sanctified. Promise in the future to endeavor to be true to that grace. Then will this devotion be to you what the Church intends it, — a joy to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to you another pledge of Eternal Glory.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prepare ye the way of the Lord. — LUKE iii, 4.

WHEN a king is about to start upon a visit to the various cities of his kingdom a courier is sent out to prepare the people for his coming, and to see that everything is in readiness for his reception. The best place in the town is chosen for his lodgment; it is cleansed and adorned as richly as possible. The people put on their holiday attire, and all is joy and expectation for the entrance in royal state of the King of the realm. Room, Room for his Majesty! is the cry on all sides as the outriders enter through the city's gates. So great is the throng of the citizens that fill the streets and byways that guardsmen with drawn swords are obliged to press back the crowd that in its fever of expectation and excitement clog the avenues of approach and impede the free advance of royalty.

One day the inhabitants of the country about the Jordan were startled by the voice of a man clothed in a camel's skin.

The cry was the cry of God's courier, the precursor of Christ, of the one going before the face of the Lord. And what was that cry that was intended for every soul upon the earth? It was the cry of repentance. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled, and every hill leveled; and the crooked ways shall be made straight, and the rough ways

smooth. And all flesh shall see the Salvation of God." It was for this, then, that the cry went forth, — that all flesh might prepare for the advent of the Salvation of God. It was for this that the hills were to be leveled and the rough ways made smooth. Room, cries the courier of Eternal Majesty Himself! Room for the King of Eternal Glory! Every barrier that would impede His easy progress must be laid low. The high born and the noble, the vain and haughty of the earth, must stoop down from the hills to receive Him; and they who have degraded themselves into the valleys of sin must arise again to the level of justice to meet Him. Smooth down, O men, the rough ways of wrong, and straighten the crooked ways of duplicity and hypocrisy, that this Salvation of God may come nigh you as it passes. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths!" Thus through the regions around Jordan resounded the cry of the Nazarite nineteen hundred years ago. His cry is reëchoed by the Church to-day, as the great feast of Christmas approaches. John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Christ in the flesh. The Church prepares the way for His spiritual coming into our souls by His grace in the blessed Eucharist.

It has ever been the custom of both Church and State to set apart certain days, to mark them in a special manner in the calendar of the year, to observe them in an extraordinary manner. Their recurrence brings to the minds of men the motive for which this observance is established. With the State it is patriotism, with the Church it is devotion. But if in the joy and excitement of the observance we forget the significance of the motive, then such days become simply days of enjoyment without imparting to men that lesson for which they were primarily

instituted; and the sentiment which originally prompted them, and which they were intended to preserve to future generations, is gradually obscured, until perhaps they foster the very feelings and sentiments they were intended to eradicate. What will it have profited the rulers of this land to have set apart a day of celebration in commemoration of the achievement of our national independence if upon that day the people think only of how to destroy that vigor of character, that integrity of manly virtue, without which there is no independence? What good to have set aside the Sunday as a day of special rest from the works of the body and to have dedicated it to the service of God, if upon that day the people rest from servile work only to do the work of Satan? Without the retention of the special signification of the establishment of a festival either of Church or State, and without a commemoration of that significance upon the day itself, the mere use of the day as a day of pleasure is meaningless, and, indeed, may be even worse.

That we may therefore the better realize what this festival that we are soon to celebrate, Christmas, is, and that we may consequently see the cause of its observance and the kind of celebration it calls for, let us for a moment bring back to our minds the meaning of the dogma of our faith which it communicates, the doctrine of the Incarnation and all that it means for us.

It is almost impossible for us to realize now in what a condition the world was at the time when Christ the Only Begotten Son of God the Father took flesh and was born into the world; and therefore it is well-nigh impossible to calculate what gratitude the world owes to God for the Incarnation of Christ. But if we judge by the state of the most cultivated and enlightened of the nations of

that time, as we learn it from contemporary historians, we must certainly conclude that even the best of men upon the earth had sunk to the lowest depths of iniquity; that the moral sense of humanity had been so dulled that they seem to have lost almost the consciousness of evil doing; and that while in the world of art and literature men had risen to the highest stage of perfection, in that of religion and morality they had buried themselves in the very abyss of ignorance and folly. It is instructive to realize that nations, who had carried the principle of purely materialistic and intellectual education to its highest point, and were matchless in the achievements of the mind, knew so little of what seems now to us, in the after light of Christianity, to be the very first rudiments of even natural morality; that men who before the world in purely material knowledge are giants, as regards the knowledge of the necessary rules of moral conduct, may be as little infants, unable to distinguish right from wrong. Greece and Rome were the centres of civilization at that time. Their works of art and literature stand even to-day as models for all succeeding nations and ages. Yet who can recount the tale of crime, of infamy, of injustice and oppression carried on under the very shadow of their temples and in the names of their very gods? They were but a type of the world around them at that time.

Even the Jews, to whom God had given a special revelation, and had preserved for His own service in a most providential manner, had gradually fallen away from the path of truth, and while constantly exacting a more strict observance of the letter of the law were at the same time losing every vestige of respect for its spirit; so that it might well be said by the Psalmist: "All men

are corrupted. They have become abominable in their doings: there is not one that doeth good, not even one. They have all turned out of the way: together they have become useless: there is not one that doeth good, not even one." Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the Gentiles; sin was doing its work most efficiently. It had dwarfed and stunted all spiritual growth. It had deadened the conscience and lulled it to a deceitful repose worse than death. It had put its foot upon each springing shoot of virtue and crushed it back to nothingness. The world had forsaken God indeed. but God would never forsake His children. Out of this darkness of death a light shines over Bethlehem. The Creator of heaven and earth, of the moon, the sun, and the "stars in their courses," has come down upon the earth. The Word, by which was made all that was made, has taken flesh, and dwells among men. Awake, O Nations, and see who is He who stands now at your gates. Ask of Him who He is, and as Jehovah answered the same question ages ago, "I am who am," Christ, the Messiah, answers, "'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.' Through Me must you arrive at your eternal destination: I am knowledge itself, and whatever there is in the soul of action and vitality, that you possess through Me."

The earth is not our home. We are wanderers in a strange land. There exist about us a thousand things that please us for the while, that draw forth our affections and make us feel a sense of rest and contentment. But not for long; a few days pass and something happens which overturns our little plans, which disturbs our satisfaction with ourselves, and we realize again the strange restlessness, inquietude, inconstancy of the very things upon which our hopes were built. We toil long and hard

to find a firm foundation; we select the strongest and most durable elements with which to build; we raise up a structure that looks at last like a stronghold against change; we enter and bar the door, and fancy that at last our position is secure. Alas, we have deceived ourselves. We have failed in the very beginning of our attempt, we forget that we build upon change itself. One little trembling of the earth beneath it and our castle lies in ruins about us. Yes, pleasant as is this life at times, happy as are our surroundings, cheerful and bright as are our dreams of happiness, out of the laughter and mirth of that very happiness a whisper comes that blanches the cheek and stops of a sudden the quick blood in its course. To-morrow sorrow lurks in the halls of gayety. Sickness and disease peer out upon the scenes of revelry, and death shadows the footsteps of all.

No, there is no home here. We must travel on and on through the journey of life, until at last we come to its end. There some arrive weary and footsore, anxious to lay down the heavy burden they have carried, and rest from travel at last. Some arrive with the fire of youth still aglow in their hearts and faces; and as they come to that end of the journey they look out upon the distant heights upon which stands Jerusalem, "the City of the Great King," the Vision of Peace. Their strength has long since forsaken them. They have grown weak in the way. They look across the chasm that divides them from those holy walls, and sigh for the peace and rest that dwell within them. But where is the path that leads to that boon? Around them all is dark. Behind them there is still to be heard the rumbling murmurs of the false laughter, the mocking revelry of the world: before them a blank. How now to reach that eternal haven?

Their hearts begin to sink, when lo! over that chasm of darkness and death the cross is let down, and a voice speaks as a strong hand lifts the fainting wanderer and guides his feet over the bridge of the cross, "I am the Way. No man comes to the Father but through Me." Thus guided, and thus sustained, the weary pilgrim leaves at last the strange land of Earth, and is welcomed by the Eternal Father into his true home, — Heaven. It is by the way which Christ has pointed out, that he must journey if at last he would lay down his pilgrim's staff in the final possession and security of eternal rest. It was for this that the little Infant God was born, to lead the world, that had been groping so long through thorny paths and lanes which only led farther and farther from home, along the narrow way that leads to Salvation.

Christ is the Truth. All action that is of benefit to man is based on Truth. Whatever good there is either in the world of science or art comes to us by the research and study by which man attains to the knowledge of what really exists in nature. The nearer the scientist approaches to the proper conception of the elements, their force and virtue, their relations and action one upon the other, the better can he coördinate them to serve human utility. An error in the nature of an element is a barrier to its application in practical art. The closer the laws of the subtle fluid we call electricity are studied the broader the field of usefulness over which its action runs, and as more and more its properties are examined, its application travels on and on through almost every branch of human industry, until men wonder and exclaim at every new mechanical application of its powers, "Where is this all to stop?" As the true knowledge of plants and herbs and minerals increases, the healing art progresses,

and the physician sees clearly the remedy to apply to each ill to which flesh is heir. What natural truth grasped and comprehended by man does for physical art, the possession and intelligence of supernatural truth does for our sanctification in this life and our salvation in the next.

Now it is Christ who brings this Truth to us from Heaven. Nay, He is Truth itself, and the understanding of Christ's character, the study of His life, His actions, His teachings, is the attainment of the most sublime truth, the culmination and perfection of all knowledge, the fulfillment of all revelation.

Outside of the light which the coming of Christ has poured upon all knowledge of the supernatural, how little, how really little, did, or do, even the most enlightened nations know of even the rudiments of moral science? Not knowing the Truth, how difficult it is for them to attain to any slightest degree of perfection with regard to the life of the soul. Before Christ came there were as spiritual guides reason and conscience. The first, although it might have shown man that there was one Supreme Being, all wise, all powerful, in fact a personal God, yet with the rarest exceptions never advanced beyond and indeed seldom arrived at the knowledge of some impersonal force or principle. Consequently from the very vagueness and insufficiency of that knowledge arose the varying and absurd conceptions of the deity that came to occupy the popular mind and absorb the worship of most of the nations of the earth.

Conscience, which, since there was known generally no external supernatural law, was the sole arbiter of right and wrong, was generally too weak to make itself heard above the din and clamor of passions and tempta-

tions. Besides, as conscience is essentially an interior prompting unable to adduce any exterior proof of its truth, it could command but little attention when the reason itself was perplexed and confused by varying appearances of reality. But in Christ is all truth; He speaks with an authority from above. He dictates with the command of a supreme master. He leads, suggests, guides, and allures in turn, as the very Creator of Wisdom and Goodness.

Compare consequently the teaching of the pagan philosophers, even the noblest, with the teachings of Christ. Put all the best sayings of Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, and Plato together and how poorly do they compare with the sublime precepts and counsels and the exquisite and matchless example of our Divine Lord in the Gospels. What reward do the pagans offer but either a heaven that is only another earth or perhaps only the mocking shadow of that, or even simply the consciousness of duty done. Virtue, they said, is its own reward. No wonder, then, that the Roman Stoic cried out as he fell by his own hand, "I have worshiped virtue and find it but an empty name." The highest flights of the pagans in the realm of truth only brought the philosopher to an abstract principle and the people to pantheism. Whenas Christ from the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air, from the grain of mustard seed and the bending corn, taught to all the world, even to the most illiterate and ignorant, lessons, that, followed out in practice, make even the child who possesses the first glimpses of their meaning a greater sage, a more sublime philosopher than them all. At Christ's Birth, then, the Sun of Wisdom arose in the heaven not visible alone to a few people in a corner of the earth, but visible to all, illuminating

all, "a Light to enlighten the Gentiles and the Glory of His people Israel." Christ is the truth eternal.

But at the Birth of the God-Man another great boon was conferred upon mankind. He was not only the path to Heaven and the Sun that lighted that path. These were intrinsic to man himself. But He united Himself most intimately to the very elements of our being. He became the Life of the world. The life is that principle by which we move, act, and think. It is that spark of the eternal activity which present makes man an animated being, with power to move himself, but which absent leaves him an inanimate block. We only know what life is by its effects. We see what the body is when the principle of its activity, the soul, is present. We see what it is after death when the soul has left it. Even such as the soul is to the body is Christ to the soul. Sin is its death, and sin had ruled the world almost with unquestioned sway before the Redeemer came. The reason of the coming into the world was to redeem the world from sin. During His mortal life of thirty-three years He prayed, and worked, and preached, and finally died, that the rule of sin might be broken; and that man, healed of its mortal wound, might rise again to spiritual life and activity.

Without that life which is God's grace, which came to us through Christ's Incarnation, whence would come the power to do anything of supernatural value? For St. Paul says, of ourselves we are able neither to think nor move, but, he adds, our power comes from the Lord. The same Jesus Christ that opened the doors of Lazarus' tomb, and bade him who was dead come forth alive, has opened the portals of our soul, and called to every spiritual faculty and power and virtue, "Come forth." Indeed what are the Sacraments, and prayers, and all the other

aids of our Holy Religion but the channels through which flow to us from Christ our Lord that superabundant life which makes it possible for us to move on step after step toward the final good. We were weak and ill, unable to travel in the right way, unable to perform one act that would merit for us eternal happiness. Christ came, and through Him we live, and act, and come at last to the kingdom of God. Christ is the life.

Behold, then, why Christ was born. Behold the reason why the Eternal Father sent His only Begotten Son into the world, a little infant, assuming flesh and blood, becoming man; our elder brother. The world had gone astray. He was the Way to Heaven. The darkness of idolatry and ignorance had covered the earth; He was the Truth. Sin had robbed mankind of all action and spiritual power. He was the Life.

To Him, then, the world owes all; not only as God all its existence and preservation, but as Christ all its grace and eternal happiness. To what do we owe the prize of being made children of God? To what do we owe redemption from the toils of Satan? To what are we indebted for the helps that sustain us in our weary passage through this world of sin and temptation? To what are we indebted for the share in God's Kingdom when that journey shall be finished at last? To the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Prepare, then, the way of the Lord, who with all these blessings comes to you on Christmas Day. With such thoughts of thankfulness and gratitude enter upon that day. Then will its celebration have a meaning and significance. Then will it be not simply a day of barren amusement, but a day most profitable and beautiful, — in a word, a Happy Christmas.

THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

To-day, the twenty-fourth of June, we celebrate the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, than whom, by the divine testimony of Christ Himself, none greater was born of woman: the last of the prophets, the connecting link that bound the new dispensation to the old.

Who has not noticed the analogy between the ways of God in nature and His sacred manifestations in the supernatural world? There is no violence where God is. He works sweetly yet powerfully. There is order wherever He presides, whether it be in His material creation or in that universe of spirit to us invisible. There are harmony and peace and the perfection of unity amid variety apparently infinite. The night is not separated from the day in an instant. The sun falls not from the zenith to the western horizon in a moment. Slowly the shadows lengthen. Almost imperceptibly the strong light dies away; the sunbeams gild only the tree-tops and the hills; the clouds are bathed in red, and then in purple hues, until the mists begin to gather, the west is dark gray, and then we say it is evening. Nor are we roused suddenly and violently from the slumber of the night by the fierce full glare of a midday sun, instantly filling the earth with a flood of radiance, rousing the world with terror from repose. Neither in the world of spirit life does God do violence to His creatures. The world had sunk itself in darkness and death. Light and life it needed; and God sent it in His own good time. The Sun of Justice burst not upon the blinded eyes of humanity unheralded

by any beam of lesser glory. Over the mountains of Judea came a beam of purest light. It lighted up the world. It was the dawn, the happy dawn of Redemption's happy day.

The fullness of time had come when the Prince of Peace was to make His advent into the world; and though He came in neither pomp nor worldly glory; though He came in the stillness of the night, yet as regal herald came one before Him, — a herald that must have startled the people of Judea as he first appeared to them, coming from the desert, thin and worn by penance, with an inspired light in his eyes, clad with the skins of beasts, altogether an extraordinary spectacle for the days of Herod, ever uttering this one cry that rang out full of power and entreaty, arresting all upon whose ear it fell: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." This is the herald of the King of Kings, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Yes a voice, but not the Word. It is perhaps that because we think only of the Word that we may in the past have let the voice pass by unnoticed. In our admiration of the King, the herald passes without recognition. Yet it must not be so. God is honored in His saints, and we know that of those born of woman none is greater than John the Baptist. Therefore the Church has dedicated to this great Herald of the King this feast of to-day, that he may receive that honor due to one so intimately dear to Christ, so closely connected with His Birth, and so faithful a servant during life. Let us, then, dear friends, dwell for a few moments upon the life of this great Saint, and read the lesson of his service, that we may the more fully comprehend the dignity of his ministry and the character of his particular share in the economy of Redemption.

The two most conspicuous traits in the character of

John the Baptist are self-denial and humility. These two virtues, the foundation of every other, the twin-pillars of the spiritual edifice, are conspicuous in the indomitable, noble soul of this Nazarite, and blaze from every letter that is written of him by the evangelist.

Mortification and humility. O virtues so little understood, so little known, so little valued, so little practiced now, what treasures are ye to the soul that possesses you! What loftiness of purpose, what nobility of character do ye inspire! What magnanimity, what power, what influence, what zeal do ye implant in him who cultivates you! Ye are the parents of all that is grand and noble in man, — of all true fortitude and courage, of all unselfishness and charity. In this double root is the sap and substance, which, fostered by God's holy grace, sends forth shoots and branches upon which bloom and blossom and ripen the choicest fruits of the soul's garden; fruits and flowers that gladden the eyes of angels, and fill the heart of man with thanksgiving to God; fruits and flowers, beautiful without and sound and sweet within, even to the very core and kernel, fit to be plucked at last by the hand that planted them and stored up in the heavenly garner of the Paradise of God. Stand among us, to-day, O blessed prophet, martyr-priest, and with the same voice that made Israel hearken to thy warning teach us to study these virtues and imitate thy life!

Self-denial is a word proper to Christianity. Indulgence, its opposite, is a word common to all humanity. To pluck the rose and leave the thorn, to sip the bright and glistening wine, and leave the dregs, to lounge in ease and luxury in life's sunshine, and bar the doors against the storm, — is not this the world's philosophy of happiness? *Carpe diem*, is the cry of nature now as it was two

thousand years ago. Life was made only to enjoy. And when pleasure ceases let life cease with it. The value of a day is the amount of enjoyment it yields. Listen but a moment and you will hear to-day in the streets, in the shops, in the fields, in the theatres, in the parks, in the drawing-rooms of the wealthy the same motto that Christ heard in Judea, "Let us eat, and drink; for to-morrow we shall die." Time can never change humanity. Its principles may vary in the position of the words; the sentiment is always the same. Does not your shrewd man of the world stamp as a fool the man who for the sake of conscience passes by wrong that is pleasant for the right that is disagreeable? Does he not stamp as insane the man who for the sake of principle chooses to keep his moral rectitude at a loss to himself, rather than embrace a policy oblique but gainful? To him good and agreeable are synonymous words. Indeed, a thing is only good in so far as it is agreeable, and both in this sense must be had at whatever cost. It is agreeable to me, therefore it is right. This is the criterion of your prosperous man.

Accept this principle once and behold where it must infallibly lead you. In the moral order it is and must be the very annihilation of Christianity; for if I accept in religion only what is agreeable to me, then I make my own religion. Indeed, beloved brethren, it can be no secret to you that there are a great many religion-makers in our own day. Upon this principle a religion which imposes any truth which they cannot understand, or any rule of conduct which is unpleasant, or any mode of life or any law of action, or any code of discipline, which interferes however slightly with their plans of enjoyment, with their habits of pleasure, with their life of gayety, is all wrong. Again it can be no very great

secret to you that for these reasons there is One Church which in the eyes of many men and women must always be wrong. Louis XIV has made his arrogance historic by one little phrase. On being told that a certain law might not be accepted by the state, he turned to his minister, and with an air of sublime egotism replied, "The state. That is I." Have you never met a Louis XIV in religion? A man who with an arrogance even superior to the French King brushes aside all controversy as if definitely settled for the rest of mankind for all future time by this logical decision. "Religion: that is what suits me." Oh selfishness without example! Oh arrogance born of ignorance! To such as these the Baptist once exclaimed, fired with holy indignation, "Offspring of vipers! unless ye bring forth worthy fruits of penance ye shall all perish." Indulged selfishness closes the eyes of reason, and men are blinded to what of all truths is most essential; what is true religion, and what their duty to God.

But the lesson of St. John the Baptist is not alone to those who close their eyes to the light of faith because it reveals to them something beyond what is purely natural. It speaks in tones much louder to those who nurtured in that faith forget in daily life the first principle of its training. What is the first condition Christ himself has laid on His followers as a mark of true discipleship? Self-denial. "He who would be my disciple let him *deny himself*, take up his cross daily and follow me." There is no day in the life of a man who strives even remotely to follow the footsteps of Christ, on which he is not obliged to practice self-denial; on which he must not choose between self and God; on which the choice is not held out before our conscience by Satan, "Behold all these things

will I give thee if falling down thou wilt adore me." If there remains one spark of Christian faith, if still there burns the fire of God's love ever so feebly, the choice must be made and made peremptorily. There may be a struggle. There is so much self in our corrupt nature that almost always we hesitate; but as we hope for eternal salvation; as we hope one day to see God forever, we must crush out self; we must trample desire under foot; we must annihilate the I that thrusts itself forward for recognition, and with a courage born of Heaven, with a fortitude not our own, and a strength that comes not of earth, we must reply: "God alone will I adore, and Him only must I serve." Every evil thought banished, every evil desire routed, every temptation conquered is the exercise of this virtue of self-denial, preached and practiced so eminently by the Saint whose feast we keep to-day.

Without this virtue there can be no true nobility of soul, no depth of character, no true manliness, no moral courage. For all these virtues are based upon man's ability to act by motives of high principle rather than of mere liking. The brutes act by instinct because there is no real choice in their actions. They are simply impelled by appetite; and the strongest appetite is the only arbiter of their actions. If, then, man is guided by the same rule; if his actions are governed not by choice based upon reason but by appetite or passion, then where is the difference between man and brute. Whatever there is must be in favor of the brute. When children rush headlong into what to those maturer seems folly, then certainly no man can but despise himself each time he acts from appetite instead of reason. The drunkard who yields to appetite, though every voice of con-

science cries out in protest, first acts against reason, and then drowns it that it may not chide him further. See what self-indulgence does for him. See what a kind master it becomes. It first demands his reputation, then his health, his prosperity, his friends, his family, his eternal salvation. Self-denial would have brought him peace, prosperity, and happiness. Which, then, is the more worthy of acquiring? In these days when there is so much abuse of drink, when even men most moderate in opinion and speech are driven by the sight of so much intemperance on all sides to raise their voices in the most emphatic manner and warn the public and the state of the misery, the ruin, the desolation it is casting about it more and more every day; when they see young lives wrecked, high aspiring hopes blasted, the tenderest ties broken, the holiest affections blighted, health decayed, prosperity vanished, heaven itself forfeited, all because passion conquers reason, appetite vanquishes judgment: in such times as these, what a blessing it would be if the people would hearken for a while to the voice that comes from the country beside the Jordan, from him of whom it was foretold that he should never touch wine or strong drink, whose garments are of skins, whose food is locusts and wild honey! Oh, if they would but stop for one moment in their headlong descent into the hell of drunkenness, and gaze for a moment on this picture of self-denial, what help would come to them, what strength to change all for the better, what fortitude to reform, what courage to dash aside forever the self of destruction and elevate upon its proper throne the self of salvation. O blessed herald of Christ, send through the wide world one resounding cry, one echoing blast, that will sound in the ears of all that inhabit the earth. Self-denial. Self-

denial, — the watchword upon earth, the passport to heaven.

The other particular virtue is humility. This, like self-denial, is most conspicuous in the life and character of John the Baptist. Born of the house of Aaron in a most singular and miraculous manner, credited with a most sublime mission from on high, commanding an immense influence over the people, for wherever he went crowds of followers gathered to hear his voice, he never for a moment wavered in true humility. He calls himself only a voice of one crying in the wilderness. Whenever there is any allusion to the Messiah in his words it is always with the most touching self-abasement. He says of Christ: "There shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoe I am unworthy to loose." Such a beautiful sentiment reminds us all of the humility of the Centurion which so pleased our Lord when he said, "Lord, I am unworthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." Both were well founded in that virtue of humility which always stamps a true Saint of God.

There ought to be no doubt as to the duty of every Christian of practicing this tender virtue. Indeed, no one doubts that it ought to be practiced. The great difficulty seems to be rather to understand what true humility is.

Humility is a virtue opposed to pride. Pride is a lofty estimation of self. Humility, therefore, must be a low estimate of self. We are not so unwilling to have a poor estimate of ourselves. A man must be very weak indeed who is not frequently constrained to admit to himself his own pettiness. A man must have traveled very little, and seen very few other men, and come in contact with a small number of his fellow creatures, who in all cir-

cumstances holds himself in the highest estimation. We have but to talk to others, we have but to mingle even rarely with men, to find after all how really little we know that others do not know better and more thoroughly. If we excel in one branch of science or industry we are deficient in another, which somebody else knows. Even the greatest men must oftentimes admit their own littleness. But that is not the difficulty. The crux is that others should have a low opinion of us. That we have not quite made up our minds to bear.

In the secret chambers of our heart we know how vile, how unworthy, how wretched we are; but it stings us to the quick, it hurts us that any one should hold us in the estimation we admit to ourselves is the only just one. And why? Each one has put the question to himself a hundred times. Why? Because our self-respect resents it; because our position demands that we repel it; because it would be weakness to allow it, and many other reasons equally human and equally vain. The fact is, however, that we are not courageous enough to recognize our own portrait when it is held up to our eyes. We would have people know and understand that we are equal to them. If we can trace our ancestry one generation farther back than our neighbor, how far below us he already begins to appear. If we know one or two more influential or prominent people than our neighbor, how soon he begins to look inferior in our eyes. What folly! What childishness unworthy of men of reason. The world is full of it; it is the cause of many a bitter word and angry deed. It debases him who yields to it, and embitters him who is subjected to it. Who cares to be patronized? Who craves for pity? Yet what more common gifts are there interchanged between the self-consti-

tuted superior part of humanity and the presumedly inferior portion of the race? But so long as men refuse to imitate the humility of the Baptist, and to understand the golden rule of charity that is built upon humility, we shall find the same arrogance and the same impatience, the same tyranny and the same rebellion, the same bickering and the same resentment, that have been rife wherever men have forgotten God's law and Christ's commandment; it is pride that makes the rich man merciless. It is pride that makes the superior tyrannical; it is pride that makes men chafe under control; it is pride that creates disrespect of authority; it is pride that creates dissension in the family and discord in the state.

Humility, far from crushing out true fortitude of character and creating a weakness of disposition, is the very root and soil of a vigorous, dignified, and bold independence and individuality. This is evinced in the life of the Baptist. Was there anything to indicate weakness in the denunciations hurled mercilessly upon the heads of the Jewish people? They gloried in their ancestry, saying that they were the sons of Abraham. What a weak claim upon the respect of men and the mercy of God. The sons of illustrious fathers, it seems, were as arrogant of their vicarious greatness then as now. But St. John, to whom human respect was a stranger, was none the slower to give them the appellation they merited, — a race of vipers. When he learned that Herod was living in the state of sin, was it weakness born of humility that made him stand dauntlessly before the monarch and tell him boldly, "It is not allowed," even though this fearless outspokenness cost him his life? True humility is never the mother of weakness. Those

Saints who in the history of God's Church have been the boldest in their denunciation of evil, who have in the time and place never feared to give voice to what they knew to be the truth, even at greatest peril to themselves, have ever been of all the rest most noted for their humility, for the utter depreciation in which they have held themselves.

These, beloved friends, are the lessons that the Baptist teaches us to-day. These are the general principles of self-denial and humility. Each one must make the particular application to his own life. Perhaps hitherto you have thought it sufficient self-denial to fast and abstain at the times commanded by the laws of the Church. Unless these facts beget and nourish the spirit of habitual and constant self-denial they are of little avail. Be assured of one thing: that without these two virtues in some degree salvation is beyond our reach. Pray, then, to this blessed Precursor of Christ that he may obtain for you these two great virtues. Say to Jesus that touching prayer so full of denial of self and humility which St. Ignatius loved so to recite. "Take, O God, my soul that Thou hast given me. My will, my memory, my understanding. My mind with all its faculties, my body with all its members. Thou gavest them all to me. I return them all to Thee. I came of nothing. I am nothing. I deserve nothing. Give Thou only Thyself to me and I am rich indeed." When we can say that prayer from our heart, then will come to us that holy peace which is born of self-renunciation, which makes the Christian an imitator of Christ here and a participator in His glory hereafter.

ST. ALOYSIUS, THE PATRON AND MODEL OF PIOUS YOUTH

THE Church, rich in the multitude of her Saints, offers to each state in life, each condition of existence, each profession, a patron,—one who during his mortal career lived in that state of life, in that particular trade or profession; who so lived therein as to perfect himself in the virtues which make the soul pleasing to God, and who now, elevated into the number of the Church Triumphant in heaven, serves as a model and a pattern to all similarly situated as he was, whereby they may mould their earthly career in such manner, that while they carry on the necessary duties and functions of their daily life, they at the same time may be doing the far more important work of fitting themselves to be inhabitants of that Kingdom of which the King is Christ and the duration is eternal happiness.

As during the year the Church's festivals go by, we see a long procession of men and women as varied as humanity; some of them crowned and robed as earthly sovereigns, others in life were in the lowest and humblest walks. Some were regarded on earth as miracles of intelligence and learning; others knew little or nothing of worldly lore. The rich are represented there and the poor. Men strong as athletes in the possession of healthful vigor, and tender delicate maids. The great ones of earth are there, and the unknown peasant: the servant walking side by side with the master. How different once! Now all the elect of God, the coheirs of heaven, the Saints of Para-

dise! So they pass day by day in vast procession all year long before our eyes. Each day one stands before us to tell us the lesson of his warfare and his victory. Each differs from all the rest in detail, but all show us plainly one thing, — that we as they can conquer evil; that we as they can overcome temptation by prayer. They refute the vain excuse of our weakness; they give the lie to the pretext of our inability. They were only what we are; men "of like passions with ourselves," subject to similar and at times greater temptations. But they became strong because they asked for strength; they conquered because they were willing to fight; they won the victory because they patiently bore the cross.

To-day there stands one before us, a youth of twenty-three; but old in God's service, for his whole life was spent in it. To him the Church leads her youth, especially students, and pointing to him she says, Young men behold your Patron. Study his life; learn from him the secret of true knowledge, — the knowledge of God and yourselves. Follow his footsteps, at least from afar, and he will lead you one day to the Eternal Wisdom, and guide you to the truth itself.

Who is this youthful saint, with the figure scarcely more than that of a boy and the face of an angel of God? It is Aloysius, the sainted scholastic of that great order, the Society of Jesus; Aloysius Gonzaga who, just three hundred years ago to-day, ended in the Holy City of Rome, in the poor, cheerless room of a Jesuit student of the Roman College, one of the sweetest, most amiable, self-sacrificing noble lives that ever it was given man to lead upon this sinful earth.

Aloysius, the fragrant flower of the Jesuit order, that great, illustrious, sublime organization than which there

is no nobler body of men upon earth; men, who even in the valiant army of the Church's most valiant soldiers, are ever in the van; men who for learning, highest cultivation, lofty intelligence, unselfish devotion, and heroic zeal, have ever stood foremost in the ranks of the Church's defenders, and who, consequently, from the day of their organization till to-day have been maligned, hated, feared, and persecuted by those who, like Satan himself, hate God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Naturally, then, to-day they celebrate with great solemnity the feast of their sainted young brother. To the thousands of young men who in these June days are graduating from their schools and colleges, they read the lesson of Aloysius' life. To those now about to start in the world upon their independent career, they speak of their Saint, that by study of his life they may understand the great secret of living well.

But although St. Aloysius is proposed as the special model of young students, yet he speaks a lesson to all young men, and for that matter to all Christians, young and old. Let us take a brief view of his short but extraordinary life, and see how into his twenty-three years he crowded all the most perfect virtues. Let us see how, in the midst of the gay and corrupt world, he preserved an angelic innocence and purity; how he combined the most lively and affectionate piety with the most brilliant success in his career; how he united the most tender and respectful love of his parents with the most inflexible firmness in pursuing the way to which God had called him. Learn from his example that sanctity belongs to every age and every state in life; that you may aim at it and attain it even from childhood, in college as well as at home, in the highest as in the lowest condition of life. Let the reading of his life show you, young

man of to-day, how important it is to give yourself early to God, and what folly, what madness it is to squander in dissipation and idleness and sin that youth which you may offer to God, and which is a most lovely and agreeable gift to Him who gave it. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

St. Aloysius, prince of the house of Gonzaga, Marquises of Mantua, was born at Chatelliene in Lombardy on the ninth of March, 1568. From his very tenderest youth he evinced great piety and signs of a religious vocation. He had the great blessing of having a mother who was herself a most devout Christian, and who, while on account of her position was obliged to mingle with the society that surrounds a court, yet always made time to keep up her devotions to God, and to instill into the mind of her little son the principles of faith and piety which he was afterwards so conspicuously to illustrate by his own example. His father, though a good Christian, was full of worldly ambition for his Aloysius, who, being the eldest son, was to be the heir to his estates and titles. Scarcely was he twelve years of age when the marquis, his father, by invitation of the king, placed him at court, to grow up with the royal offspring and be present at the receptions, and accustom himself to the grandeur of court life, and thus fit himself for the position which naturally he would be obliged to fill in the great world. Far from being dazzled by the splendor of temporal dignities he soon conceived a disgust and repulsion for all this glitter and show. The nearer he approached the splendor that surrounds royalty, the more clearly he saw how hollow, unstable, fickle, and unreal it all was. The more he mingled with the gay, thoughtless, frivolous throng that swarmed about the royal presence, the

more he understood the uselessness, the folly of such a life. Here, in the very splendor of an earthly king, he longed to devote himself to the service of the King of Kings alone. Here, amid the dissipations, the pageantry, and the gay life of court, he sighed for the lowly, retired, and obscure life of a begging friar. Here, in sight of the scandals and the unholy lives of many, he first made to his heavenly Mother, Mary Immaculate, his vow of perpetual chastity, and his resolution to leave all — estates, titles, wealth, high position — in order to devote himself forever to the ministry of the Church.

Behold this pure lily blossom and lift its fragrant head to heaven out of the very dung-hill. Behold this pearl amid the filth of iniquity that surrounds it. Behold this child of God, at an age when the world has for others the greatest charm and the greatest fascination, with the clear vision of a pure soul weigh it all in the balance. On one side he puts all that he sees about him, all that others prize so highly and give so much to attain, and on the other the right to a happy eternity, and he chooses the latter. Though the voice of self-love, the pleasure of self-gratification, the views of ambition, the music of the feast, the splendor of the court, the vision of human beauty and love cry out to him, he stops his ears against them, he turns from their deafening cry, and with his heart lifted up to God and his eyes heavenward, he says, "The Lord is my inheritance. Thou, O Lord, shalt restore to me my inheritance."

His mother received the resolution of her son with joy, for it had always been her prayer that one of her sons should enter the priesthood; but the marquis, his father, upon hearing it, fell into a terrible rage, and refused his permission and his sanction of Aloysius' choice.

At once he began to devise means of shaking his son's purpose. Thinking that a round of gayety and travel would soon obliterate all thoughts of a clerical vocation, he ordered Aloysius on a tour of visits to all the courts of Italy, to which, as a prince, he had entrée.

Foolish man! He little knew how deep down in the heart of his son the seeds of sanctity had already taken root, or he would never have dreamed that such a frivolous life, as he had destined for him, would have any charm for a heart which God had already sealed as His own.

Aloysius complied with his father's request, and with his brother set out upon his tour. He passed from one prince's palace to another, — among the courtiers, but not of them. In the midst of a grand banquet or court ball he would retire to some obscure room in the palace where he thought no one could find him, and drawing from his breast the crucifix which he always carried upon his person, would kneel and pray for hours that, at last, God would change his father's heart and make him grant his petition to retire forever from the world, that he might spend his life in the service of God alone.

At last his prayer was granted. In the presence of the Emperor he renounced his right to all his estates and titles, and on the feast of St. Catherine, 1585, being then seventeen years of age, he entered the novitiate of the Jesuit order at Rome in the same spirit of satisfaction that a man finds in gaining a secure haven after a storm, and broke forth in the words of the Psalmist: "This is my rest for ever and ever. Here will I dwell for I have chosen it."

The rest of his life was but a story of increasing sanctity. Sheltered in the monastery, this tender blossom bloomed into one of the loveliest and most perfect flowers

that ever adorned the Church of God. Day by day he became more and more the model of his fellow students and novices, and a source of edification and admiration of his superiors. It would be impossible to enter into details of his holy life. Absolute obedience, most perfect self-denial, complete renunciation of self, most faithful fidelity to his rule in this general way alone can we speak of his life as a novice with the Jesuits. He performed every duty with absolute fidelity. Even the smallest offices he was called upon to fulfill he discharged with the utmost care, and with as much solicitude as if it were a matter of supreme importance. He moved among his associates as if he were some angel of light come down from heaven itself to teach them the way to climb to heaven, to consider that whatever they did, great or small, should be done well, because it was done for God.

Always delicate of body, his great mortifications, practiced even from his earliest youth, told upon his health, and now that delicate frame began to show signs of waning strength. Daily he grew weaker, until at last he was compelled to recognize that his life must soon come to a close. God had destined him to live much in a short time, to show that, at a time when others are just beginning to be fascinated with life, he had learned all it could teach. And so Aloysius comes to die. In a poor, bare room, in the Roman College, upon a pallet of straw, this prince both of earth and heaven breathed forth his gentle, noble soul. With his eyes resting upon the crucifix which, as a youth in his father's house, as a courtier in the palace of kings, as a novice in the Society of Jesus, had been his constant companion and his greatest consolation, and with the name of Jesus

upon his lips, he yielded up his pure soul into the hands of his Creator, on the twenty-first of June, 1591, just three hundred years ago to-day.

No sooner was he dead than he who had been such a model of virtue during his life began to be invoked as a saint of God. Devotion to him spread throughout Italy, and thence was carried to all parts of the world. Miracle after miracle was wrought in his name. In 1618 he was declared blessed by Paul V, and in 1726 he was canonized by the Church as one of the Saints of God.

Every year the devotion to him increases. The room in which he lived and died in the Roman College has been transformed into a beautiful oratory, where it is the custom for young, newly ordained priests to celebrate one of their first masses. Thousands of students all over the world, but particularly in the city of Rome, have been to communion this morning for the sixth successive Sunday in his honor.

The house of Mantua is no more. Celebrated as in their day were its princes, they are now forgotten. Aloysius alone is remembered. Aloysius who left all the titles and honors, desiring only to be forgotten by the world, after all, is the one member of his illustrious family who has made his name famous and blessed for all time to come. This is the history of our Saint. Who can read it without at least some spark of devotion being kindled for this angelic youth, and feeling some gratitude to God for raising up such a saint to encourage and guide us during life? Here is a picture for our young men of to-day to look upon and blush. We look not for examples such as Aloysius, for we should look in vain, but for imitators of the two chief characteristics of Aloysius' life, — piety and self-denial.

CHRISTMAS AND EASTER JOY CONTRASTED

In the stillness of the long winter night, when earth lay slumbering and all nature seemed dead and lifeless, fit emblem of the spiritual death that had fallen upon men's souls, an angel choir announced the glad tidings of Emmanuel, the birth into the world of the Infant Redeemer.

Thirty-three years later the Angels came with another message. But the time was in the "very early morning," "at the rising of the sun," says the holy Gospel, and the season was the glad springtime, when nature was shaking off the icy bonds that held her captive, and the first signs of returning life were already evident on earth and in sky. The long night of patient suffering had passed. The Passion had been undergone, the Cross with its awful burden had been elevated; the dead Victim had been buried in His borrowed tomb; the Jew scoffed, the Apostles began to doubt. After three days of dreadful silence, the word of God, again by Angel voices, was spoken to the world, "Christ is risen." Joyful as was the song of the Angels at Jesus' birth, beautiful and consoling as was the message of peace on earth, yet had not this other word "Christ is risen" been spoken, all would have been in vain, but a fleeting hope, the short blessing of the candle flame that expires flickering and leaves behind only the charred wick and the smoke.

Greater than the joy of Christmas is the rejoicing of Easter. Louder and higher than the Gloria of the

Angel of the Birth is the anthem of Alleluia that is chanted by the Angel of the Resurrection. Holy Mother Church, with more triumphant note than that which summoned her children in the *Adeste fideles*, bids them in the *Haec dies* "be glad and rejoice in this day which the Lord hath made."

The tidings of the Resurrection of Christ, therefore, is glad news to be circulated throughout the world, the revelation of the most precious truth, the inspiration of the deepest joy. It was to turn the apparent folly of the Cross into eternal glory. It was to prove that the death of Christ was no failure, but a most glorious triumph. It was to establish, beyond further doubt, that whatever Christ had said was eternal truth; that whatever He did had the authority of God. It crowned and confirmed all His miracles, and proved them and His doctrine alike divine. It was the seal of the approval and acceptance by God of the life of His Son. It was the hand of the Almighty showing forth His power to establish beyond cavil that Son's Divinity.

After our Divine Saviour had yielded up the spirit, the few faithful ones, who remained under the Cross until the end, took the Body reverently down and laid it, bruised and wounded, in the arms of His sorrowing Mother. Then they brought Him and laid Him in the tomb. They closed the sepulchre. Mary, leaning upon her new-found son, St. John, returned to her sad home in Jerusalem. With the night came the soldiers to guard the tomb. A Roman soldier slept on guard at peril of his life; and these were guarding the seal of Cæsar set upon the tomb. Strange occupation, indeed, for Roman soldiers to be set on guard over a dead man, lest a few simple and affrighted peasants, who had fled at the first

sight of danger, "should come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people: He is risen from the dead!"

All that night and the next day they patiently surrounded this quiet tomb. The Sabbath night came on and the dawn of the third day was near. "He said He would rise again in three days," they whispered to one another. If the morning sun of the first day of the week should arise and find His grave undisturbed and His body still lifeless within, then all that He preached was a lie; vain illusions, the visions of the Shepherds and Wise Men; pure imposture, His whole life and teaching; simple dupes of his cunning, the poor fishermen that left all to follow Him.

Little as the soldiers cared or believed, that night must have been a period of intense curiosity. They would be sure to watch vigilantly each moment of their time. With the fidelity of Romans they would have fallen rather than allow that body to be taken from the tomb they were set to guard. The midnight hour approaches. What is this light that bursts upon them, blinding them with its brightness? It is the Saviour who, risen and glorified, bursts forth from the tomb. No longer do the wounds of the bitter thorns defile His brow; no longer are the marks of the cruel nails upon His flesh; but Jesus Christ triumphant, glorified, incorruptible, impassible, rises from the tomb, the conqueror of Death and Hell, God and Redeemer of the World. He rises to vindicate His life, to fulfill the prophecies, to be forever the first fruits of those who die. "Rejoice, therefore," says St. Paul, "again I say rejoice."

To Christ the Resurrection meant that God had ac-

cepted His sacrifice, that His work had not failed. On Good Friday how hopeless appeared His cause. Hanged upon a cross like a common malefactor, jeered at and mocked as a wild fanatic, His death seemed to quench every hope of redemption. He had claimed to be King of the Jews, and the Jews recognized in Him only a criminal. He professed to have power over life and death, yet here He lies, conquered by death. Even the Apostles seemed to feel that perhaps they too had been deceived. They forgot His miracles, even the Transfiguration, in the utter disappointment which overwhelmed them upon Calvary. With what a tone of sadness did two of them on the way to Emmaus narrate to the risen Lord, whom they knew not in the garb of a stranger, how all their hopes had fallen, and how, notwithstanding that the holy women had told them the story of the empty sepulchre and the Angel, they regarded it all as an idle tale, adding in conclusion that they had hoped it was He who had come to redeem Israel, but that now it was the third day since His death and all hope had fled. Had He not died like other men? Then He must indeed have been only like other men. This was the conclusion that forced itself upon the minds of the Apostles, who, in the weakness of their faith, had already begun to suffer the scandal of the Cross.

As for the Pharisees and the Jewish people, they were satisfied now that no more would be heard of the blasphemous pretensions of that impostor; that, after such a death, His disciples would soon see their own folly, and that, in a month or two at most, Jerusalem, the Holy City, would return again to its usual peace and complacency in the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees; and that the people would be all the more

unwavering in the old faith, because of their experience with this dreamer. How the money changers of the Temple must have chuckled and returned again to their usual posts of barter within its courts. How relieved the Pharisees must have felt that this merciless critic of their hypocrisy had at last been laid low. How free Herod must have felt upon his throne now that this pretender had been removed. How Satan must have rejoiced to believe Him whom he had long suspected to be the Messiah, come to crush the serpent, proved at last only a deluded enthusiast with more pretense than power. If there could have been rejoicing in Hell, it must have been when Jesus breathed His last breath and like every other man paid His tribute to death. Who could say that all had not failed? Mary, indeed, was sure of the ultimate triumph. Perhaps John and the Magdalen, too, remained steadfast in their hope. But all the world and Hell rejoiced in the utter failure that had its strongest proof in that lifeless corpse that lay in the tomb of Nicodemus.

But then came the Resurrection and all was changed. God had accepted the great sacrifice. The Pharisees were confounded; the Jews were perplexed; the Apostles rejoiced; Hell again trembled; and Heaven opened its gates wide to receive the conqueror of death and sin. Behold the miracle that exceeds even the most ambitious dreams of man. He had raised others to life. But to raise Himself to life, that was His privilege alone who Himself had direct dominion over death. Behold the stamp that seals every word He had spoken, every act He had performed. He had claimed divinity for Himself; He had said He was God; He had made Himself equal to the Father; and the Father approved His claim and mani-

fested His approval to all the universe by this miracle of miracles, the Resurrection. Behold the great fact, visible to those who had scoffed at its possibility, and those who had doubted it. The same Christ, with the same body, for forty days after walked among His disciples, talked with them, ate with them, preached to them as He had during His mortal life. Yes, this was the great triumph over His enemies; this the proof of His entire veracity; this the confounding of His enemies and the reassuring of His disciples. Henceforth it was the most potent theme of the Apostles' preaching; the one incontestable proof of the divinity of the religion they preached. It still remains the miracle of miracles that stands absolutely impregnable, — the keystone in the arch of Christian faith. For as St. Paul says: "If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain." At last was proved to the world what He had said to Martha at the death of Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believeth in me, even though he be dead shall live."

The latter part of this same sentence from the lips of our Lord reveals to us the meaning of Christ's Resurrection for mankind. "He who believeth in me, even though he be dead shall live." Christ's Resurrection is the type of ours. "Even as Christ rose again from the dead, so we too shall walk in the newness of life." To every man who believes in Christ, and manifests that belief in works as well as in words, Christ has promised that he shall be raised up at the last day. On that day, when the trumpet shall sound, they that are in Christ shall rise first; and as the soul of the Redeemer took up again His body now glorified and radiant with the life of the Spirit of God, so shall our souls return to fill these bodies again, to live therein forever in the glory

of God. The eyes that now cannot look upon the sun can then gaze upon the face of God and not be blinded by His majesty. The ears that now weary of the music of the earth shall be then attuned to the music of heaven, and shall drink it in and enjoy it for all eternity. Our whole being will be purified, sanctified, in every sentiment until our body itself shall seem to partake of the soul's nature and become almost spiritual, almost divine.

The triumph of Christ over death is our triumph. To the Christian who reads well the whole lesson of the Resurrection, death ought to bring no terrors. Since the first Easter Day death is but the gate to life eternal; the happy ending of all that is mortal, and the birth and beginning of immortality, the very opening of an imperishable existence. Let him who hears not the words of the Angel, "He is risen," fear death. To the Christian it comes as it came to Christ, the harbinger of greater joy and everlasting glory.

But the glorious resurrection that awaits the just on the last day will come only to those who, having died to their evil inclinations, have arisen in God's grace to die no more. We must follow the command of Christ and lose our life now to save it for all eternity. Sin in us must die; self must die and be buried not for three days, but forever. And we must live no longer for self, but for God. "If you have risen with Christ," says the Apostle, "seek the things that are above. Not the things of earth." Christ to-day sits at the right hand of His Father in Heaven. Thither let us turn our eyes. God made man so that he should walk erect and look upwards. Let us not, like the brute, crawl upon the earth and see only what lies thereon. Let this Easter morn be a pre-

paration for the great Easter when all flesh shall see the salvation of God; when this corruption shall put on incorruption, when this mortality shall clothe itself in immortality. "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad therein."

SERMON AT THE DEDICATION OF ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, LOWELL, MASS.

The king and the children of Israel dedicated the temple of the Lord. —III Kings viii, 63.

In every age and among all peoples no place has been held more sacred, no spot more jealously guarded, than the altar on which sacrifice was offered to the Deity. Whether we read the Books of the Old Testament, or study the national life of Egypt, of Chaldæa, of Greece, of Rome, or of any other nation that has flourished down to our own era, we find recorded the same truth. The temple dedicated to the service of God was the inviolable centre of the life of the people, whose real devotion to the Divinity was shown in the splendor of its temples and the pomp of their dedication. Recall Solomon's magnificence at the consecration of the great Temple of Jerusalem to the God of Israel; recall the power and majesty of Rome, republican or imperial, displayed at the dedication of a temple to Jupiter, or Mars, or Saturn, or any other god of the Pantheon. From all time, since the Creator made the first covenant with the creature, during the ages of light and the centuries of darkness, with the innate sense of the obligations we owe to the Supreme Being has been coupled the practice of setting apart a place sacred to God, in which we are to discharge the duties of His worship.

At the dawn of Christianity, when mankind emerged from the dark night of paganism, and of a cynical and

false philosophy, the new Church, the Church of the fields, of the hill-sides, and of the Catacombs, converted the ceremonial of religion which had been profaned in the service of false gods to the service of the true God, and sanctified it in His honor who had called men "out of darkness into His marvellous light," and "illuminated life and immortality through His Gospel."

Henceforth the beauty of nature and the gifts with which God had endowed man were no longer to be misdirected to the deification of the creature, but were to be employed in the glorification of the Creator. The tabernacles of the false gods of Olympus and the Capitol were deserted or destroyed, and by the Edict of Constantine the fugitives of the Catacombs came forth to erect temples to the God to whom belonged the earth by the double claim of creation and redemption. It was but a short time before the name of Jesus was carried to the ends of the world and magnificent temples were erected in which to worship Him, true God and true Man. The poverty of the Primitive Church naturally gave place to that beauty and splendor which has made Christian churches the treasure-houses of the world's arts.

With the unhindered growth, in numbers and wealth, of the faithful, the Ritual developed apace, until now the Church possesses a treasure of ceremonial befitting the service of the King of Kings, in whose honor it has been established. A part of this Ritual was to-day employed in the dedication to the God of Hosts of this edifice in which His children are to assemble to participate in the Sacrifice of the Altar, and to offer Him fervent prayers with the same true affection and strong faith which characterized their forefathers, who on this spot seventy-five years ago reared the first church in this

city to the honor of God and under the invocation of their national Patron. To-day the Church of Christ with all the beauty and solemnity of her ceremonial sets apart from all profane use, blesses, and dedicates to the service of the Creator this building, the fruit of your hard, untiring labors, the reward of your patience and perseverance in the face of early obstacles and later calamities, a worthy monument to the Faith that has marked your steady growth. This beautiful church has been dedicated to God in the name of the great Apostle of Ireland, blessed and opened to you as the house of prayer in which to meet and commune with Him who has made His covenant with you.

Thrice above this holy spot has arisen a temple so dedicated and named. Thrice has the faith of this people shown itself invincible by change and devastating elements. Thrice have they given proof, in a larger degree and a nobler manifestation, of that strong faith which has ever been characteristic of our race and blood. Here stood the first house of worship to which flocked the little throng of poor immigrants who had come to this industrial centre to start life anew after the first pangs of exile.

What a picture the memory of those days brings strongly before our eyes! Let us look upon it in reverence and learn its lesson.

Within the modest structure here erected seventy-five years ago our fathers knelt in adoration, and heard, under the humble roof of the first rude church, the only words of consolation that greeted them. No wonder that, as they knelt groaning under the burdens almost too great to bear, beginning a new life among a cold and hostile people, memory brought them back to the little stone church on the hill-side far away in the distant

home of their forefathers; no wonder that, as they prayed, the tears often fell from eyes well used to weeping; no wonder, too, they wished to give to that little church the name of their dear Apostle of Ireland. This little chapel amid scenes harsh and strange was the one solace of their comfortless lives, the one holy spot which reminded them of home and of heaven, the one holy influence which softened somewhat the bitter pangs of exile. No wonder they loved it and thought their little savings all too small to offer for its permanence among them. It was an oasis of peace amid a desert land.

Around them was the whir and the noise of spindles, and the din of the busy loom. Along the banks of a noble river Industry had reared its magnificent temples, and the sacrifice it demanded was the sacrifice of interminable labor. Long before the morning sun had risen the clangor of the bells above these temples of a heartless god aroused them from the short sleep which scarcely sufficed to fit them for another day's work. There was no music in those bells. They were but the fierce voice of a tyrant summoning to the sacrifice of commerce. Six days in the week they heard this summons, which called them to long hours spent amid the din of machinery, which silenced every sympathetic voice. It silenced words, but as their nimble fingers guided the quick shuttle, their thoughts at least were free. The clamor of the loom drove their thoughts in upon themselves. Their eyes watched the woven fabric grow inch by inch as the shuttle with heavy blows was driven from side to side. The warp and the woof mingled to produce the strong and beautiful fabric. They might have read in this the mystery, the sad yet glorious mystery, of their own lives, driven hither and thither by harsh fate like the shuttle, but weaving

under God's design a strong fabric, which should clothe, like a mantle of glory, their own sturdy offspring. Through all the six dreary days they listened for the music of that one bell, which spoke to them not of tyranny, but of love; not of toil, but of peace in their Father's house. In the early Sunday morning, after the long week of labor almost without repose, their hearts bounded in welcome to its sound; the weary limbs shook off fatigue; the tyranny of a life of drudgery was forgotten. The bell above this modest temple reminded them that they were free men, not slaves; free, at least, to keep the Faith untarnished which in those bitter days was absolutely their only consolation; free, though not unhindered.

We are loath to recall now the memory of the hard struggle which these exiled children were forced to make in order to worship God in their own holy way, but unless history records the fact that, besides the struggle for material existence, these sturdy pioneers were compelled to face insult and injury for the Faith, we of to-day shall not grasp the full significance of the lesson of those hard beginnings. Without recalling the struggle which they endured, we cannot render to those confessors of the Faith the honor to which they are entitled, nor can we grasp the meaning of that force which withstood every attack, open and secret, against their religion; nay, which came forth from every new attack stronger and more beautiful, just as this third temple surpasses in these qualities the other two which preceded it. There is between the church which we dedicate to-day and the children of the Church here gathered within its walls, both inheritors and descendants of humble beginnings and hard struggles, a close and immutable analogy, and an

indestructible bond of affection, the triumphal witness of a great survival, — the survival of the children of a strong race, and the triumph of that unquenchable Faith in God's revelation to man, which, like the power of God Himself, only grows stronger in the tempest of misfortune, and, like gold in the crucible, only the richer when tried by the fire of persecution and adversity.

In those early days the name of Patrick received scant honor. In those years of the birth, here in a stable, of Christ's Church, her feast days were interdicted and proscribed. There was little joy in those gloomy days of Puritan tradition, even little religious joy. There was no Christmas and no Easter, and those merciless bells above the temples of Industry on those great festivals of the Church jangled out of tune with the holy sentiments of the Catholic laborer. But the shuttle of life has gone on doing its work all these silent years, and to-day the sons of the early Irish immigrants are alive to behold the victory of Faith over the once dominating spirit of harsh unfriendliness. And we, sons of those hard-working, honest, God-fearing men, would be false to the memory of their noble, self-sacrificing lives, did we on this day of the resurrection of old St. Patrick's forget the sturdy and uncompromising spirit of truly Catholic Faith, which, for all answer to taunts and jeers and opposition, sank the foundations of this temple only the deeper and reared its cross-topped steeple only the higher, willing to wait for the great day when their sons should sit in the high places, and rule in the very halls where their names were proscribed.

Oh! surely to-day we who gather in this beautiful temple may see in its resurrection not only a new triumph of architecture, but clearer still the victory of that power which overcometh the world — our Faith.

In this busy centre of industrial life two tremendous forces have been working side by side from the first days of its history; both have contributed to its making: Industry and Religion. The first has contributed to its material prosperity; the second has preserved the peace of order without which prosperity would have been a curse. Let us for a moment contrast the two. It is a great part of to-day's lesson. Industry fills the busy streets with the clamor and noise which are ever its companions. Religion issues silently from the stronghold of the temples and in silence achieves miracles.

Labor in itself, inasmuch as it produces something useful for humanity and by its fruits helps man along the road of progress and development, is not a curse, but a blessing. No right-minded man has ever spurned honest toil. So long as the fatigue which comes with labor does not overtax the bodily strength, it aids health and vigor. Under such conditions work becomes a pleasure. But when inordinate greed for wealth presses the laborer beyond endurance, and when the dignity of labor is ignored and its just titles to respect passed unnoticed, then work becomes slavery, and slavery is the mother of revolt. Paganism recognized only the right of might. Wealth gave power, and power was a divinity. The weak and the poor had no rights. The weak were plundered and the poor enslaved. In those dark days the laborer toiled without reward; the fruits of his work were not his, but his master's. Under such conditions the lot of the toiler was an accursed one.

But at the moment of deepest gloom comes the light; that "Light which enlighteneth every man coming into this world." Christ came, poor and lowly. He took up the carpenter's tools, and His life at Nazareth was the

sanctification for all time of those who toiled. From that day the burden of the workman was lightened. When the Son of God became a workman, the latter became God's son. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," was part of the doctrine which was to save humanity. Henceforth slavery had no rights to be respected; henceforth the condition of the laborer was settled by a divine law, and all tyranny was doomed. By teaching all mankind the rights of manhood, and by elevating that manhood to the glorious inheritance of the children of God, He struck a blow at the unbridled power of might, which until His day had kept the poor and the weak in slavish subjection. History has proven again and again that only Christ and the Church of Christ have been able at one and the same time to protect the workman against tyranny and injustice, and safeguard the just interests of those for whom he toils.

But all the evils of paganism did not die with the advent of Christ. All through the ages, from time to time, reappear the same evils which existed when Christ came. On the one hand is avarice endeavoring to wrench from labor more than its due; on the other, the cry of envy for what is not its own. Between them stands the Church of Christ warning the one of God's vengeance upon the oppressor of the poor, and calming the other into patience with the promise of a share in the riches of God. It is this eternal attitude of the Church towards her children in the different stations in life, teaching them their sacred duty to one another, that has preserved that harmony which has made civilization possible. So long as her voice is heard that harmony reigns. The employer and the employed are both her children. On the one she inculcates generosity

and justice; on the other patience and forbearance; and she reminds both that the rich and the poor alike shall be held responsible one day, each according to his state of life, to that God who gives prosperity and blesses poverty.

Thus has the Christian Faith preserved the equilibrium between class and class, and whenever the balance has been inclined to either side the bitterest feuds have arisen. In every age each has had its special pleaders who by specious argument and foolish promises have stirred up the worst sentiments of humanity; but no Catholic is ever deceived by unlawful pretensions or by unfeeling arrogance. For him the meagre reward of lowly toil and a clear conscience before God are infinitely preferable to dishonest gain. In the possession of the peace of an humble heart he looks unmoved and unenvious at wealth gained by dishonesty. This is the sublime indifference which the Faith of Christ alone has taught; this is the happy poverty which those who have not Faith can never understand.

Such was the holy influence exerted upon the laborer in this little church seventy-five years ago. Perhaps it was little realized how potent that influence was and still is. Without that influence where would be the permanency or the peace of this fair city? Take away from those who go in and out through the portals of the great mills this guiding spirit, this sanctifying influence, this patience under trials, this antidote of envy, and before long its absence would be felt in ways that would shake to their foundations the peace and prosperity of this city.

The Church has ever stood for the inviolability of human rights, and neither the flattery of the rich, nor the threats of those in power, nor the tumult of the envious

have ever moved her from that unconquerable stronghold. The law of just possession, the right to possess what either by inheritance or by personal industry man owns, is a right founded upon the very laws of nature. As the protector of the weak she has ever taken her stand with the people, but while she has protected, she has never flattered them; and while she has fearlessly set her face against the frequent abuses of the powerful and the rich and the masters of the world, she has with equal fearlessness taught the people their sacred duty, the obligations of their state of life, and repeated again and again the injunction of the Eternal Law-giver: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, neither shalt thou desire his house, nor his field, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."

The pioneers that came to labor here seventy-five years ago were taught the rights of man and the duties of man, and from the pulpit of new St. Patrick's other voices will continue to repeat the same gospel of love and of duty, of patience under trial, of the spirit which envies not, reminding all who hear that there is a God, the Father of all, who sees, who rewards, and who punishes. That is the potent force which safeguards the foundations of this prosperous city. Without this force, so silent, yet so effective in its operations, the shuttle and the spindle would have woven a flimsy fabric.

In later years with the growth of industry wealth has grown, and the evils concomitant upon new conditions have grown with it. The sturdy simplicity of those early days is fast passing. Industry has multiplied its temples, and the greed of money, the appetite for which grows with indulgence, is admittedly a danger to peace and order. If with increased wealth, if with the prosperity

which flooded the land as if God were showering His blessings upon the nation, hand in hand went a corresponding gratitude to God, a corresponding generous response to the higher duties imposed by better conditions, all would yet be well. But when men's hearts grow only the harder, when the blessings of heaven fall on stony ground, thorns and thistles grow up instead of wholesome grain. The dangers which are now confronting us and which, if men do not have a care, will assume alarming proportions, are in reality nothing new; they are but the repetition of the evils of paganism which Christ came to heal.

The Church has confronted them in the past, and today if men will but hear her voice, she can restore health and tranquillity in spite of threatened disorder. Out of the Babel of voices, every one clamoring to be heard, every one proclaiming his own nostrum and panacea, every one combating the principles of the other, and only succeeding in adding to the strife and increasing suspicion, distrust, and even hatred, there is no hope of a true settlement of the social evils. It is easy to point out evils which all admit to exist; it is easier still to lay blame all around the vicious circle of mutual distrust. It is hard, however, to make each man realize that upon him in part lies some of the blame, and to persuade him to do his share in the righting of wrong conditions. That the Church alone can do, for she deals not only with the great masses arrayed on either side, but especially with the individual conscience, and by that tremendous moral force which turns man's judgments in upon his own deeds, leading him, by the fear of a just God, to make his actions tally with the eternal principles of God's justice, she brings order out of chaos. She puts aside the lens which magnifies the evils which others do, and in its

place holds up a mirror before each man's own individual soul; for men forget that the complicated evils of society are but the massing-up of the irregularities and the sins of individuals.

If each man in the State or city were absolutely faithful to his own individual duty, to God, to himself, and to his fellow man, there would be no wrongs clamoring to the nation for settlement, no national ills crying for legislative remedies, — remedies which after all are mostly like the ointment upon a sore, purely external, not the true medicine which the Gospel of Christ alone ministers, attacking the evil at the very roots of the disease. Envy, jealousy, hatred, avarice, indolence, luxury, — these are all more than visible sores upon the body corporate of society; they are deep-rooted spiritual diseases flowing from the invisible sources in the mind and the heart of the people.

The lessening of labor and the increase of wages will never in themselves settle the eternal unrest of humanity. Even the multimillionaire, if his greed and avarice are unquenched by his possessions, remains as restless and unsatisfied as the humblest laborer in his employ. The blame, therefore, is not with any one class; the fault is general and is daily growing. Prosperity will do little to appease the ravages of a spiritual disease. Indeed it seems only to aggravate them. The disease is not material; that is the common mistake of all so-called reformers. It is deeper than food or clothing; it is spiritual. It is not the body but the soul that is unhappy.

How well the children of the Church in this city of industry have understood this great truth is witnessed by the sacrifices which they made in its maintenance. This humble people, looked upon in their day as unlearned

and unlettered, were in reality versed in the sublimest philosophy of life, — a philosophy which sprang from the Fountain of Wisdom twenty centuries ago, and has hallowed the world ever since. It is the science of the Cross. That sacred symbol has taught men more than all the books that scientists have ever written. The Cross contained all the learning of this simple folk, and, unlettered as they were, it served them in better stead than the rich libraries in many of the homes of their masters. It taught them the noblest virtues possible to mortal man; the holiness of poverty, the sanctity of suffering. In the practice of those virtues they labored on, filling in a noble way their humble station. They bore the burden and the heat of the day like true heroes. Few of them lived to realize their mortal hopes, but the immortal hope which their Faith had kept clear in their souls never left them, and it has grown stronger and stronger in the hearts of those they left behind.

The hardy pioneers of Lowell's earliest days are now at rest. Their ashes repose in the silent church-yard. The good priests who kept that light of Faith burning in their souls lie sleeping here before this holy temple, but the work which they began has gone gloriously onward ever since. The Faith so strong in their Irish hearts was never to be conquered or weakened by the god of commerce. If the temples of industry increased in size and number, side by side with that growth was a glorious multiplication of the temples of the true God, the God of their fathers. For every new area along the river's bank claimed by industry there was a corresponding spot upon a hill crowned by a splendid sanctuary, always surmounted by that same cross which their fathers loved.

Let others boast of the city's progress in wealth, of the long streets lined with the marts of trade, of the increased traffic which has marked the passing years; all are signs of progress and prosperity in which every son of Lowell heartily rejoices. But to us who value the riches of the soul above material wealth, the brightest jewels in the crown of this fair city are the seven truly magnificent temples of the true Faith, of which new St. Patrick's now stands above all the rest. These, indeed, are Lowell's chiefest glories. Well may priests and people pride themselves on an achievement, unique, I venture to say, in all the length and breadth of this great country, for no other city of its size can point to that number of models of ecclesiastical architecture, reared in so short a time by the humble offerings of a faithful people, given out of the hard earnings of laborious lives, blessed a thousandfold by a noble generosity to the Faith, which is their richest possession.

Well may it be said that the little grain of mustard-seed planted here seventy-five years ago has grown into a noble tree. How the hearts of the little band who came here then to worship must rejoice to see this day! Out of the dead past their voices speak to us in silence and remind us that we are but the heirs of their patient efforts. They sowed what we are reaping. It was their steadfastness in the Faith, their loyal attachment to the lessons which St. Patrick had taught to their ancestors, which enriched the soil that now brings forth such noble fruit.

The faith and devotion of those that are dead — the noble line of pastors of this church and the people who worshiped here — gave the strong impulse which has brought up their children of to-day into the fruition

which we enjoy. The very beauties of this majestic temple are but reminders of our indebtedness to our fathers who labored and who died here, — an indebtedness which we can cancel in one only way, by fidelity to all the high principles of our holy Faith, which we may profess with none of the hindrances so common to them.

Let us never forget the heroism of their lives. The thought of it will stimulate us to be true to what they held most sacred. Shall we, who have now become a power in numbers, be weaker in spirit than they were when but a pitiable minority? Shall we, who have learned more of books than they, know less of true wisdom? Shall we, who to-day are rich in comparison with them, show ourselves poorer in all that is most worth having? Will the sons in their prosperity do really less for God than their fathers in their poverty? That were a poor requital, indeed, for their sufferings and their labors. Their blood is in our veins and their faith is in our hearts.

They had their difficulties to overcome and we have ours. A new generation faces new opportunities and new perils, and our perils lie often precisely in our opportunities. To be master in the house where once one's father served, to rule the city which our fathers built, is a triumph only where one rules as well as his father served. If positions have changed, so, too, have responsibilities. You may glory in the change which time and opportunity have brought only when to those new responsibilities you have brought the same honesty, the same fidelity, the same simple purpose, the same unselfishness, the same self-sacrifice, the same faith in God, which your fathers in their lowly lives showed forth and discharged until the end.

Catholicity has grown in Lowell during these seventy-five years. The little minority has developed into a great majority. Our conditions have changed with the times, but there is one thing in which the Catholic of to-day does not excel the Catholic of seventy-five years ago, and that is the strength of his Faith. Not only in numbers have we increased, but in the variety of races represented among us, until Lowell has become a very cosmopolis, in which nearly every country under heaven has her representatives. But the Catholics of seventy-five years ago, the pioneers of the Faith, who dug the foundations and who reared the walls, who patiently faced the greatest difficulties and quietly surmounted them, were the Irish Catholics. That is a fact of history which must never be forgotten.

When others came the hardest of the work had been done, and there is this which all those who have come since must never cease to remember — that the children of St. Patrick were always true Catholics, Catholics not only in their faith, but in their charity. They never questioned the nationality of their priest. They never asked whence he came, so long as he was sent by ecclesiastical authority. They listened to the message he delivered to them, often when they could scarcely understand his language. They were never national or provincial in their faith, or in anything that concerned the Church. Even their love and their veneration for their Patron Saint is a proof of this. St. Patrick was not an Irishman, but he came to them from Rome, and from that day he was their own.

In that noble Catholicity of spirit the Irish Catholic teaches a needed lesson. Not one of all the strangers who since that day have come to Lowell's gates but has

asked from the children of St. Patrick aid and encouragement, a request that even to this day has never been denied. Indeed, it were none too much to say that, in laying the foundations of every Catholic church in this city, abundant assistance has been received from this generous-hearted people. And even though that glorious record should be little remembered, it is safe to say that that forgetfulness would never close the hearts of Irish generosity, which thinks only of the progress of the Faith, no matter who carries it onward, and only of the glory of the Church's standard, no matter who bears it ever higher. The priests and people of St. Patrick's, and of old St. Peter's as well, while rearing magnificent temples for their own children, have always had, nevertheless, even in their poverty, hidden resources, from which they drew liberally to aid the children of other races. That is what I mean by saying that Irish charity is truly Catholic charity. Let all who listen learn and imitate. In such union of hearts alone is the security of the future of the Faith. He who preaches that charity preaches God's word and represents the Church's Catholicity. He who preaches another doctrine is false to his sacred duty.

Oh! triumph of the Faith of God, this is thy day. Oh! Church of Christ studding the hill-sides of the world, with towers and spires that bespeak the conflict between God and mammon, to-day another fortress is planted on the heights. Oh! altars of the Living God upon which the perpetual Sacrifice is offered, to-day a new one is added to your number. Oh! shrines of the Saints of God, to-day your glory is increased. Here let the children of a sturdy past keep ever green the memory of their faithful sires. Here through the length and breadth of nave

and transept, from the silent hearts of a prayerful people, and from the deep diapason of the glorious organ, shall arise the same hymn of praise, the same solemn voice of adoration which centuries ago resounded through the Halls of Tara, as the souls of Erin's chieftains were stirred by the potent voice of St. Patrick, rousing into a new and holier harmony the harps of the Druids of old.

To-day let priests and people rejoice. Time has not changed, nor has fire consumed their glorious inheritance. From out the ashes a new glory has arisen. May the God of our fathers be ever with us in the new days as in the old, and may dear St. Patrick still from his high place in heaven protect his people, in whose generous hearts the Faith he planted is still hardy and fruitful and strong. Even far from the land he converted the children of that people love his sacred name.

To God and St. Patrick is this glorious temple rededicated. To them we offer it with the homage of our fidelity and eternal trust. Accept, O God, the offering of Thy children. Bless it and sanctify it. And may Thy Holy Presence rest here forever.

TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY[1]

Jacob autem genuit Joseph, virum Mariæ, de qua natus est Jesus.

Jacob begot Joseph the spouse of Mary, of whom was born Jesus. — MATT. i, 16.

HERE in a few words is narrated the great glory, the ineffable honor, conferred upon Our Lady, "of whom," says the evangelist, "was born Jesus." It was from this prerogative that all the grace, all the power, all the holiness of our Blessed Mother took its origin. Christ, by the touch of His most sacred flesh, made the waters of the Jordan holy, and not only that particular stream, but the waters of all the earth He sanctified and made efficacious by His grace to be the instrument in baptism to regenerate man and cleanse him from all sin. What, then, must be the purity of her from whom he was to assume His Sacred Humanity? Sin could never have defiled, even for an instant, the soul of her whom He was to call His mother. The Most High sanctified His tabernacle, and could never permit that she who was to give birth to His Only Begotten Son should for an instant be under the dominion of the arch-enemy of God and man. God Himself gave instructions to the Jews as to the form, the size, even the very material of the Temple, in which was to be laid up the Ark and altar of the old law. Are we to suppose that He was indifferent as to the soul of her who was chosen by Divine decree to coöperate in the work of man's Redemption? Ah, no, Catholic faith teaches us that from the very first moment of her conception she

[1] On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

was God's, and God's alone, as God was afterwards in a manner hers, — flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone.

Many of the Saints of the old law, we are told, on account of their sanctity spoke with God, walked with God. What, then, must have been the extreme purity and holiness of her of whom God was born, since motherhood is the most intimate, the closest, the most real union that nature knows? Mary was the Mother of Jesus, and Jesus is God! The Incarnation was planned from all eternity, and from all eternity Mary was predestined immaculate, without spot or blemish. She was the King's daughter whose beauty was all interior. "Fair as the moon: radiant as the sun: terrible as an army in battle array." Rightly, then, do we rejoice to-day in celebrating her feast. If the world raises monuments to its heroes, if society venerates the memories of those who were distinguished as warriors, statesmen, poets, artists, should not we raise our voices to-day to honor her whom God has honored? If God Himself has called her by that dearest of names — Mother! — can we be wrong in doing the same? We are her children by adoption and grace, as we are Eve's by natural birth. Christ gave her to us when He was dying in agony upon the cross. Through Mary Christ, though God, is our elder brother in whose Divinity we participate, not by right, but by His own will who deigned to be born of woman, that man might be redeemed.

It is just, then, that we celebrate this Feast with all the holy joy of Mother Church who calls upon us to praise God and thank Him for having preserved our Blessed Mother from all stain of sin. Each one of us, no doubt, feels that he really honors our dear Lady;

and yet how comes it that in this country, her youngest child, this land consecrated to her under her glorious title of the Immaculate Conception, there is such little demonstration upon her feast days? A civil demonstration such as we see in the Catholic countries of Europe, where whole towns are illuminated and the people display all the signs of joy that we are accustomed to see on a national holiday, for us is not practicable. But what of that spiritual rejoicing which evinces far more clearly than mere material ceremonies that we endeavor to appreciate the great dignity that is ours in having such a Queen as our Mother? Noticeable, indeed, is the absence of the multitude from the holy table; the scant respect that is paid to her images and pictures; the small number who talk of her with due reverence. These are the signs which betray a true client of the Queen of Heaven.

We have become, perhaps, so weary of explaining their signification to those who can never understand them that we have half resolved to give them up altogether. But if we do this, then by what right can we call ourselves true Catholics? For Catholicity surely imposes upon us the duty of venerating the Mother of God. If we are at liberty to set aside all the doctrines and practices of the Church for the simple reason that they cause misunderstandings, or excite curiosity, or appear strange, then there is no dogma of our Faith that we need profess. For they have all been denied, all been called in question, all have been ridiculed and blasphemed. Upon that ground our devotion to Mary can no more be laid aside than the Eucharist, the Incarnation, the Trinity.

All antiquity, since the foundation of the Church, witnesses to her invocation and honor as the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, the Saint of Saints. And

as the Church cannot change, we of to-day, and in this country, are not dispensed from paying her the honor that is her due, any more than were the Christians of the Early Church. In the Catacombs of Rome, and in its subterranean churches, where the early Christians used to meet to celebrate in secret the Divine Mysteries, we still see well preserved the paintings which represent Mary seated upon a throne, next her Divine Son, clothed in royal robes and with a halo around her head, emblem of her sanctity. In yet others we see her represented holding her Divine Babe in her arms, just as to-day she is pictured in our churches.

And to-day, too, we as Catholics are bound to honor the Blessed Virgin. This is no new doctrine. It was taught us from the time when we first lisped the Hail Mary at our mother's knee. Why, then, is it that we see so little of it put in practice? That we speak her name so coldly; that we never think of her in our necessities, that we never fly to her in our needs? Familiar, indeed, are the prayer of St. Bernard, in which he says that no one ever was known to have been abandoned who had recourse to her protection, and the adage, that no true servant of Mary can ever be lost. And yet we hesitate to call upon her. We know that devotion to her is a sure sign of predestination; and yet we scarcely realize in what true devotion to the Mother of God consists.

And how should we pay homage to Mary? When one is so fortunate as to be given an audience by a foreign prince or ruler, with what diligence and care he inquires about the customs of the court and the ceremonies of the palace, so that he may present himself in accordance with all the formalities used on such occasions. Should we be less diligent in learning how to obtain the favor of a

Queen so mighty that some of the Saints have not hesitated to say that all grace comes from Jesus through Mary?

True devotion to the Blessed Virgin is marked by three qualities. It should not stop with appearances, but extend to the heart; it should be constant during all our lives; it should not lead us to presumption.

There are many devout people who show their devotion to the Immaculate Virgin in pious exterior practices. One always abstains, or even fasts, every Saturday in her honor. Another always wears her blessed scapular. Another always carries about with him her rosary. Another says a certain favorite prayer to obtain her intercession: and so on, with a number of excellent, praiseworthy customs which are approved by the Church, and are very efficacious in procuring her favor. But if the devotion stops here, it is not true devotion. It may gain us the grace of true devotion, but in itself it is not all that our Blessed Mother expects of us nor all that the Church intends.

St. Thomas states that true devotion towards God consists in having our wills prepared promptly to give ourselves up to all those things which pertain to His service. Therefore, logically, true devotion to Mary consists in a ready will to do everything that she desires. Is this the devotion we practice? Have we this desire to do whatever is pleasing to Mary? What affection do we feel for her honor? What zeal for her glory? Are our thoughts ever turned to her, and our conversation ever about her? Do we love to hear her spoken of? Does our fasting teach us to abstain from sin because she was sinless? Does our rosary tell us of the virtues she practiced, and bid us imitate them? Does our scapular remind us of

her spotless purity and unsullied innocence, and recall the many times we have stained our souls by vice? If not, then we are not really devout to Mary; we are not true clients of the Queen of Heaven.

The Church knows man's nature too well to reject material aid to spiritual things. St. Paul said that the creation told man of the God who made it. Holy Mother Church does not close her eyes in her devotion, but uses all the beauty of ceremony and the pomps of exterior worship, that by them she may raise our minds to God. But she never intended that mere external devotion could take the place of spiritual worship, or that scapulars or rosaries could supplant the aspirations of the heart. They are blessed by her only because by them we may the more readily understand and appreciate in our inner souls the glories and honors of our Blessed Mother; and if we neglect the lessons they teach, and heed not the inspirations they give birth to, they are not fulfilling the end for which they were instituted, and we are not deriving from them the profit which the Church intended.

St. Augustine says that true devotion consists in the imitation of the one we venerate. How poor is our devotion! Mary so pure, we so unclean. Mary so fervent, we so lukewarm. Mary so humble, we so vainglorious. Mary so generous, we so unbending in the exaction of respect.

Of what use will it be to us if while we profess to be Catholics, and children of Mary, we neglect to follow the example she has set us? Whatever our exterior devotion, though excellent in itself, it cannot take the place of true interior imitation of the life and virtues of the Immaculate Mother of God. But if the honor we show

to Mary springs from the heart, ah then each little exterior act, each candle burnt in her honor, each bead told in her name, the scapular, the rosary, everything we use for her sake, contributes to strengthen the claim that we have upon her affections, and is another link in the chain that binds us to God.

The second quality of true devotion towards Mary is that it should be constant.

How often when we hear or read of the wonderful helps she has vouchsafed her servants, or the miracles that are wrought at her shrines, do we, too, make up our minds to begin some devotion to our Blessed Mother, — to approach the Holy Table upon her feasts, to enroll ourselves in some of the many societies consecrated to her, to be more attentive in reciting her rosary. But how few of these resolutions are ever put into practice! To-day they are made; to-morrow they are forgotten. Thus are all our holy promises broken; all our purposes put aside. Like a summer torrent a flood of devotion has momentarily rushed in upon our soul; the next day there is not even a drop. But true devotion is not like a noisy stream that one day bursts its bounds and the next is dried up. It is a noiseless, deep-welling fountain that knows no drought; that is sending forth always its healing and refreshing streams, till it irrigates the whole being and keeps the soil continually fertile. At all times and in all places our words, our thoughts, our actions, ought to show its holy influence, and witness to its sweetening power. Not that we are never to take heed of the spontaneous outbursts of our hearts, which at times are almost uncontrollable; but our devotion must not stop there. These holy impulses are no doubt great graces from God to stimulate us to perseverance and constancy;

but they are only the beginnings, and do not constitute the whole design of God. Even among men one who is inconstant, whimsical, ever-changing is looked upon as a weak character. How then may one expect to obtain the favor of Mary by such a devotion?

When some sudden adversity, some extraordinary sorrow or affliction has seized us, the natural instinct, which as Catholics we cannot suppress, bids us hasten to the feet of our Heavenly Mother and tell her all our troubles and beg her help. We kneel before one of her altars or one of her pictures and pour out our miseries, begging that they may touch her tender heart and cause her to intercede for us with God. We own how sinful we are and promise to amend. We acknowledge how unworthy of her patronage we have shown ourselves, and assure her that in the future we will be her children, if only now she will assist us in this difficulty. The favor though unmerited is granted. For a moment gratitude fills our hearts, and our thanks are sincere and deep-felt. But soon lukewarmness steals upon us, our fervent thoughts grow cold, and little by little the stream of gratitude is frozen, until finally all is wintry and dead that a moment before was throbbing with the warmth and beauty of life.

The basest of all sins is ingratitude. And what is this if not ingratitude to our heavenly Benefactress? When necessity forces us we rush to her for favors; when our needs are supplied we act as if we had forgotten everything that we had received. Let not this be our conduct to so bountiful a Mother. Let not this be the character of our devotion, but rather let us so honor her as to merit always the name of dutiful children, of grateful subjects. Let our devotion be ever firm and constant, so that in our needs we may have

instant recourse to her without shame and remorse for former neglect and forgetfulness.

Finally, my dearly beloved, we must never allow our devotion to Mary to degenerate into presumption. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a great mark of salvation only when it is the cause of our serving God better. When we are so stained by sin that we dare not turn to God, Mary is an all-powerful advocate; and hence she has been called the Refuge of Sinners. The Fathers have likened her to the Ark of the Covenant because she is a continual pledge of God's presence and God's mercy. But if we become so confident in her power that we persuade ourselves that in order to be saved it is sufficient only to perform some slight act in her honor, then we are, indeed, guilty of a great presumption. On some occasions the habit of saying every day some little prayer or wearing her scapular has, indeed, at the hour of death been the cause of snatching some souls from the power of Satan. But these cases are not proposed to us for imitation. They show how powerful is the intercession of the Mother of God, even when it would appear that salvation was beyond all hope. If we content ourselves with such confidence in her, without striving to avoid sin and to make our lives better, it is not devotion, but rather dishonor. Can the Mother of God be pleased with any respect shown to her if at the same time our whole life is a warfare against her Divine Son from whom alone she derives all the dignity and power she possesses? St. Brigit tells us that the Blessed Virgin herself has called herself the "Mother of all sinners *who wish to amend their lives.*" While, then, we retain our affection to sin which so offends Almighty God, and as a consequence His Mother, we only dishonor Mary by pretending to any

right of assistance from her. Confidence in Mary is holy and praiseworthy and pleasing to her, but presumption is an offense, not a devotion.

My dearly beloved brethren, honor our dear Lady in such a manner as to merit God's blessing during life and her assistance in the hour of death. Let our devotion towards her be something more than exterior signs and habits. Let it penetrate to the soul, and let it manifest itself in our lives. Let us be constant and persevering so that not a day may pass without some tribute paid to her, some worthy offering made to her. Above all, let the soul be pure and free from all affection to mortal sin, so that we may imitate her sanctity and purity of life. This is the only solid, real devotion which can merit her recognition. If we spend our lives thus in loving servitude to the Queen of Heaven, we may justly expect that at the hour of our death she will show all the gracious and merciful assistance of which we shall so stand in need. Let us honor her feasts by receiving the Body and Blood of her Divine Son; for by this means we also imitate her who carried Him in her womb; and since her maternity is the root of all her glory, so the Eucharist shall be the fountain of our devotion to her. This is the devotion she loves; this the devotion that does her honor; this the devotion she rewards. May it be ours now and in the future, that we may hereafter receive the assistance that it merits from Mary Immaculate in the hour of our death.

O Ever-Immaculate Queen of Heaven obtain for us the grace so truly to honor, reverence, and serve thee here on earth, that in heaven we may share thy joy, beholding for all eternity, face to face, thy Almighty Son.

HONOR DUE TO THE CHURCH

Corde enim creditur ad justitiam: ore autem confessio fit ad salutem.

With the heart man believeth unto justice: but with the mouth confession is made to salvation. — Rom. x, 10.

The days are now past, and let us hope forever, when to profess Catholicity was to expose oneself to the opprobrium of society. The Church is now recognized by all as the only true civilizer, whether people choose to admit it openly or not. With the enlargement of public thought many of the petty prejudices and unfounded misconceptions have vanished, and now Catholicity is respected, if not admired, even by those who differ from her tenets. Men have begun to judge others not so much by what they profess to believe as by what they do. Action has superseded creed in the balance of merit.

Notwithstanding, however, all this freedom of conscience and liberty in religious matters, it is passing strange that even yet we find some Catholics who, though they would not for the world deny outright the Church of which they are members, still feel little at ease when asked about their faith, and speak about it as if they really thought an apology was due for professing it. Their speech would seem to imply that they ought not to be blamed for being Catholics since they were born and brought up so. How often in our own experience have we met such men among our acquaintances or friends. Thank God they are few; but even those few do a world of harm and mischief to the Church and to their fellow Catholics. To the Church, because they seem to imply

that she is not the only true Church. To their co-religionists, because they suggest the suspicion that they themselves are "false brethren." They scandalize many outside the pale, who are led to believe that Catholicity teaches doctrines which her adherents are ashamed to confess. They lower themselves in the estimation even of enemies of the Church; because if there is a character despised by all honest, well-thinking men, it is one who dares not profess openly his assured convictions. He may imagine he has gained the favor of those who differ from him, but he is most certainly deceived; for though externally they may praise his so-called liberal-mindedness, yet in their inner hearts they despise it. They would be wanting in all judgment and reason if they could suppose that a man who would betray his God could ever deserve the confidence of men.

It is not required of a man to parade his religion to the offense of his neighbors, who may think otherwise, for by that he would only excite scorn and ridicule; but it is absolutely necessary, when there is question of upholding the honor of Holy Church, that every Catholic should unhesitatingly manifest his love and veneration, just as a loyal son would for his mother. From this no Catholic, howsoever exalted his position in society, howsoever dependent he may be upon public favor, can be excused. It is not any priest, nor bishop, nor pope, who lays down this law. It is not even the Church. It was made by Jesus Christ Himself, when He said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me before men, I too shall be ashamed of him before My Father who is in heaven." O terrible threat! O awful sin to merit such a punishment! When Christ who is our Advocate, our only Hope in the last day to stand between us and eternal wrath, shall

turn His back in shame upon us, because we have been ashamed to own Him as our Master before mortal men.

My dearly beloved brethren, we have every reason to feel proud of our holy Mother the Church. We have every reason to thank God for the ineffable grace of being of her fold. We have every reason to honor with most profound respect her that is the Bride of Christ and the channel of our salvation. Two great claims has she upon our veneration, — her own intrinsic merits and the benefits she confers upon us, her unworthy children.

Every term used by Holy Scripture and by the Fathers to designate the Church is a proclamation of her greatness, and a just title to our loyal regard. Every name proclaims the graces that exalt her, the beauties that adorn her, the glories that crown her. The most noble of all her titles is the Bride of Christ without spot or blemish. With what a love did Jesus love her! Eve, the Bride of Adam, was formed from the rib of his side, as a sign of how intimate should be the union between them. The Church was born and sanctified by the blood that flowed from the wound in Jesus' side; and He died that she might have life. He lavished upon her every favor. He bestowed upon her every grace. He loved her with an infinite love. He was crucified in ignominy upon the Cross that He might redeem the children she would bring forth to Him till the end of time. Before His death He commended her to His chosen Apostles that they might look to her welfare, and provide for her development, and ordain their successors to maintain her honor at any cost.

The Apostles all died martyrs to the fidelity with which they cared for one so loved by Jesus; and thousands of their successors have followed their holy example. Truly

therefore does she merit our respect and veneration since Christ never tired of showering upon her all the riches of His infinite love. He loved Mary because she was His Mother. He loved the Church because she was His sacred Spouse, and the Mother of all His children.

She is called the mystic "body of Christ," of which the faithful are the members and Jesus is the head. What must be the beauty of such a body whose grace and life and comeliness are all animated by the virtue and holiness and purity of a God! What noble blood flows through her veins! What generosity and love and magnanimity fill her heart! What firmness and health invigorate every member! What a true reason for pride it should be to each of us to be even the meanest part of such a body! In reality there is no part of it insignificant, no part little, no part vile; but every portion of it partakes of the dignity of the Head, and participates in the life of the whole. We are the members of this Body; and whatever may be our station in life, however high our birth or rank, all nobility dwindles into nothingness in comparison with the nobility, the grandeur of being a part of Christ's mystic body, — a member of Holy Church!

In many places she is called the "Kingdom of Christ" which though in the world is not of the world: the "City of Truth," because error is unknown to her: the "Temple of the Holy Ghost," because in her resides the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, — the sanctifying principle of all she is or does. Numberless are her glorious titles which are more than mere words or figures of speech. They express precisely the dignity and merit which she possesses intrinsically, bestowed upon her by her Divine Founder, and which should move us

to appreciate the great honor that is ours in being her members.

If we examine her real prerogatives, our admiration will only be confirmed. The Church is indefectible in her existence; she participates in the immutability of the Truth she teaches. She must always exist, and exist the same, until the end of time. There can be no time in which she can be said to have ceased to be.

She is infallible in her teaching. In as much as she proposes for belief the doctrines which Christ Himself has revealed, error can never enter into her creed: falsity cannot vitiate her doctrine. And hence she is called by St. Paul "the pillar and the ground of the Truth," — the base upon which the Truth stands, and the upholding power thereof.

She is preëminent and preëxcellent as a society because she governs not only the material bodies of men, as other societies do, and regulates their exterior acts and duties, but extends her jurisdiction to the very soul, and claims authority over the innermost motions of the heart.

Her splendor and beauty can never be hidden, for she must always remain a visible entity before men, and her light, because of the indwelling of God, must always shine with unclouded brilliance: wherefore she is likened in the Gospel to a "City set on a hill which cannot be hid."

She knows no limits, no bounds save the earth itself; for she goes to all nations and peoples and tongues in all times, and claims them as subjects to her Lord and King, Jesus Christ. "Go ye and teach all nations" was His command to His Princes the Apostles. They went, and still continue to go; and for this reason is she ever called the Catholic or Universal Church.

Again if we consider her different causes — formal, efficient, exemplary, and final — we shall be all the more convinced of the respect she justly claims from us. Christ the Son of God is her founder. She is animated by the Holy Spirit. She is modeled after the Celestial City with its choirs of angels, and her end is the glory of God and man's salvation. These are the beauties of the Daughter of the King! These are her prerogatives of greatness and glory: her splendors which shine from within, but which manifest themselves afar. Is there any earthly society or family that can boast of such titles? Oh, how proud we should be to be children of such a mother, — members of such a society, parts of such a body! And all this is but the consideration of what the Church is in herself, independent of the advantages and blessings she bestows upon each one of us.

What are the claims the Church has upon our honor on the ground of mere gratitude? The Church is a most lavish parent. Everything we have, or ever shall possess or enjoy, everything noble and holy and meritorious in the spiritual order, has come to us from Christ through her. Think of the sacraments alone. Have you ever realized the loving care with which the Church nurtured and cherished us from the very first moment that we came into the world? Have we ever reflected upon the diligence with which she has anticipated and met our every want? Have we ever seriously thought of the more than Mother's affection with which she endeavored to countervail our every weakness? Scarcely had we seen the light when she gave us a spiritual birth by Baptism. She routs Satan from the possession of our soul, she washes it of original sin, and presents us to God as His child, stamped with His likeness by grace, and He accepts

us from her and adopts us as rightful heir to His kingdom.

Time passes, the powers of the body develop, the limbs and members increase in strength and firmness. The soul too must develop, must grow in strength; and again Mother Church takes us to the altar, and upon us is poured the chrism of Confirmation which endues the spirit with the armor of God, and strengthens it to fight boldly the good fight of Faith intrepidly. Would to God we might always do so. Would to God we might ever show our valor in the field as true soldiers of Christ. But man is weak. The flesh rebels, his mind becomes dazzled by the glitter of the arms and the din of the cannon, and in an evil moment the enemy seizes upon him and he falls wounded to the heart. Fear not, good Christian, the Church your Mother has followed you into the thick of battle; she has witnessed your failing strength; she is beside you upon the field and leans over you as you fall all but dead; she comes to your rescue with the Sacrament of Penance; she whispers the words of absolution in your ear after you have confessed your degradation; she binds up the wound, and raising you in her strong arms sends you boldly to the fight again. But unless our feeble strength be sustained, unless there be abundant and solid food and drink, our powers must diminish, our weakness must prevail. She takes you to her Holy Table and places before you the Banquet which her Divine Spouse has given her to minister to faithful souls. The Bread of Angels she spreads before you. The precious Body and Blood of Christ Himself she offers you as nourishment, and its participation builds you up and strengthens you once more for the warfare of God.

The army of Christ must not be disorderly, undisciplined, without system or regularity. There must be the officers and commanders and their assistants, and there must be the General-in-Chief from whom shall proceed all the commands and instructions as to the manner of attack, the character of the arms, the routes of march and line of battle. By the Sacrament of Holy Orders the Church selects and creates all these, stamps their souls with their insignia of office, puts the sword of the Cross into their hands and the helmet of salvation upon their heads, and hands them the shield of Faith. She gives and sanctifies the right of authority, and commands her children to obey. Thus is the army put in powerful array; thus is all disorder, and rebellion, and schism, among the soldiers of Christ put down at its very birth, and all are kept in unity of thought and similarity of desire. Since the battle is to last not only during our short lives, but must be waged till time shall yield to eternity, so the ranks must be filled up with recruits. They must receive the proper training, and learn the art of battle that they too may prove valiant warriors and gain the victory.

By Matrimony the Church blesses the conjugal tie, and strengthens the married couple to bring up their children in the fear of God. And, finally, a time must come for each one of us when we shall be obliged to leave this battlefield forever. It has been a weary fight. The body has suffered as well as the soul. Our mortal frame sinks under the burden it has borne, and we lie upon the bed of death. But not even there does the enemy give up the attack. Until our last breath he will continue his bitter assault. Were it not that Holy Church is standing by to console and strengthen us even then, how dangerous would be the conflict. But her sacred minister approaches

and anoints the weak members, and by the oil of Extreme Unction our soul, and often even our body, is fortified to give the final blow which must determine for us the victory and the reward. Not even at the death-bed of him who during life has been but a poor worthless renegade traitor is she wanting. She takes him in her arms and weeps over him as though his treachery only served as stimulus to her love.

When the grave has received all that is mortal of us, when our body is cold and lifeless, she does not sit down disconsolate at the loss of her heroes or at the faintness of her coward soldiers in the fight. She knows that the soul still lives. It has gone into eternity to receive a share in the victory. But how can they who showed themselves weak and heartless at times enter at once into the possession of the kingdom where only the brave are admitted? They must wait until the soul is purged of all its dross, and becomes pure and holy and fit for the presence of the great God. Holy Church therefore offers up her tears and prayers and the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass in propitiation for the infirmities of her children during their warfare upon earth. And God accepts her offerings and opens Paradise to its heirs. Even beyond the grave the Church loves us as her tender children, and intercedes for us with our Heavenly Father.

These are the benefits which she confers upon her children by the sacraments alone. Numberless are the other advantages which we gain from her unlimited bounty, — consolations in our sorrow, strength in our weakness, the grace of moderation and true joy in prosperity, of resignation in adversity, of thankfulness for health, and of patience in sickness, and a thousand other blessings that

make life worth living, and possible to be lived so as to merit the reward of God. In consecrating Christian rulers, she teaches that all authority is from God, and thus gives guarantee of stability to the civil fabric.

In a word, there is no sphere of life, no condition of society, into which she does not enter and strive to sanctify. What department of man's noble activity has she not fostered, encouraged, brought to perfection? All that is valuable in the arts and estimable in the sciences she has preserved and developed by watchfulness and care. The priceless inheritance of classic literature must have perished had it not been for her monasteries, which have always been their home. Painting, sculpture, music, architecture have in her service achieved their most splendid triumphs. Mental development in the higher branches of learning has flourished under her fostering hand. The noblest intellects in all ages have been proud to confess themselves her children.

It is only because we know so little of the ineffable grandeur and splendor of our Holy Mother the Church that we feel so indifferent about her honor. Our want of zeal for her greater glory comes, and can come, only from our want of knowledge. Even her enemies have admitted her comeliness, though they have lacked the courage to submit to her as her children. And shall we who live in her house, and feed at her table, and partake of her favors, have the base ingratitude to turn upon her, or even to blush at the mention of her noble name? A day will come when those who are not of us shall rise up against such cowardly sons and accuse them before God of robbing them of light to follow where she leads. What a crime it is to stand in the way of saving souls and bringing them into the true fold by our disrespect towards the

Church, instead of assisting them by showing in how great honor we esteem our religion.

"Confession is made by the mouth to salvation." It is not enough to believe in the heart, our faith must manifest itself, else it is dead and unprofitable. But if we are dutiful and loving children, the amount of good we shall do will be incalculable. Love the Church because she is your Mother. Respect and venerate her as the Sacred Bride of Christ. Show yourselves worthy members of her who is Christ's mystic body, that one day you may enter the kingdom where Jesus her Head is God and King, and where those who have been true to their religion and defenders of its honor shall be forever happy in the Beatific Vision of God their Father. For Christ has said, "He who confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and His holy Angels."

AN HOUR IN THE CATACOMBS

A DIARY LEAF

"WRAP your throat up well in your muffler, for the air is very chilly below. Wait! the signor's taper is not well lighted. There! now it blazes. Be careful not to let your lights blow out and walk close behind me. All ready? Well, let us descend."

With sentiments of mingled awe and curiosity we proceeded, six of us, down the rough stone staircase that leads from the lovely vineyards that clothe the fields around the Church of St. Callixtus into the city of the dead, the resting place of the heroes of early Christianity. "Stop a moment. I cannot see to follow you," shouted one of the party. Indeed, so sudden was the transition from the broad light of day to the nightlike darkness of these crypts that it was impossible to distinguish an object a few feet off. "*Caro mio*," said the old guide, "what need have you to see? I am to be the eyes of my good masters. There, I knew your light would go out; put your hand before it to ward off the draughts or you will see less than before." And with a broad grin and a chuckle that shook his whole body he made a shield of the palm of his hand in illustration.

"Bless me!" said one. "See the man. He looks like a shade of one of the departed guiding us through some region of the dead." True enough! As the light from the candle was reflected fitfully upon his face, it lit it up with a strange weird expression, suggestive of some unearthly

being standing there in the deep gloom of the cavern. "An ogre with a nightcap," declared another in English; and as the whole party grinned broadly at the allusion, the old man, perceiving we were enjoying ourselves at his expense, cried, "*Andiamo*," and started off at so rapid a pace along the long narrow passageway that once or twice those at the end of the file lost sight of him. But as our leader had taken a firm grip on the large cloak of the guide, and each succeeding one clung to the coat of the one preceding him, there was little danger of losing our way even though we could not well see just where we were going.

Down, down we went through the parted earth, through dismal lanes so narrow as to permit only single file, until finally we reached the level of the path that winds through the subterranean graveyard. We stopped for a moment, and as our eyes by this time had become more accustomed to the darkness we began to examine the character of the spot where we were standing. We were many feet below the surface of the earth, in a passageway, very long and narrow, dug out of the earth, which was damp and cold. The ceiling was very low, just above our heads, and large drops of moisture fell from it to the pavement below with a sound that was magnified by the intense stillness of the place. A moment before our party was gay and rollicking as young lads just let out of school, but now every one was mute with awe and reverence. An air of sanctity pervaded this damp, dark tomb, and a solemn stillness reigned. A sense of the holiness of the place converted the company into a band of veritable pilgrims. And how could it be otherwise? In this under-ground city for hundreds of years had slept the remains of many a hero

of the Faith. Here in the very bowels of the earth our ancestors in religion had passed years unknown, persecuted, hunted like wild beasts, driven from the freedom of air and light, detested, despised, for Him who said, "Blessed are ye when men revile and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake." Here beneath the great city of Rome was planted that seed that was to grow into a tree, the branches of which stretching out from a new and Christian Rome, pushing their way silently through the crumbling walls of its pagan temples, would extend to the utmost limits of the earth and embrace in their loving clasp all nations in all times to come.

"What is the signor thinking about?" said the hoarse voice of the guide in my ear. "We must not delay so long or we shall not be through at the Ave Maria. Why, if you stay so long at the very beginning of the Catacombs you will not have time to see their most interesting parts. Follow me." "Go on," said I. Cautiously we crept along through the narrow paths that crossed one another in bewildering confusion. At times so closely were they crowded together that we often wondered why the impending crust did not break through overhead, so slender did its support seem.

"*Guardi!* Look out!" said the guide. "Be careful not to fall into that hole there in the passage before you." It came just in time. For, a moment more and I could not have escaped it. I took up a piece of solid earth from the floor of the passage and let it fall down the aperture. I expected to hear the sound of its dropping somewhere below. I listened, but no echo came, and as I looked up surprised, the old guide was gazing at me with an expression of amusement on his face. "What is this?" I

exclaimed. "Is it a pit or well below? You were none too soon with your warning. I should not care to follow that lump of earth." "*Amico*, no more should I. No, it is no well. You see, it is just this." And he leaned his shoulder against the side of the passage, and took from his box a huge pinch of snuff which he proceeded to take with the utmost gusto, with the air of one who would say: "Here is a chance to show these strangers they don't know everything. Here is a piece of information they would like. Well, they must wait for it."

After a full minute's pause, during which he regaled himself with a few more pinches from his large bone snuff-box, he proceeded to explain: "You see, my friends, these caves were first inhabited by a rather small company of Christians who came here that they might worship the good Lord in peace. But as the band grew larger and the persecutions more violent, they soon found that there was not room enough for all. So gradually they burrowed and burrowed, poor creatures, like so many hunted foxes, until they had dug out gallery under gallery, built just as this is in which we now stand. The space between them in some places is very small, and as the earth has become worn by constant travel, here and there fragments of the floor have given way and fallen into the gallery below. So you see, although it is neither pit nor well, it is deep enough to make it uncomfortable for any one who might fall through." When he had delivered his little lecture with the air of a great archæologist, he thrust his snuff-box violently into his pocket, and bade us follow him.

A few steps farther on he stopped again, and running his torch up and down the walls of the passageway he said, "These are the tombs." The light of our tapers

revealed to us niche over niche dug in the sides of the gallery, presenting an appearance not dissimilar to the sleeping berths in a ship. "Here in these shelves of a vast library Death arranged his works." In several of those niches were yet lying skeletons of the dead, and on the sides of a few, attached by some sort of plaster or cement, were little phials through the transparent sides of which could be seen the blood now dark and congealed that had been shed for religion, and gathered thus by pious hands.

"Here is a slab with an inscription," said the guide. And as he held his lighted torch under it I deciphered the Latin characters upon it. It read:—

"Here lies Marius, youthful military commander; who lived long enough since he spilled his blood for Christ. In peace."

What more touching than this simple epitaph to the soldier who laid down the arms of the pagan emperor that he might take up those of Christ!

"Do not wait too long, friends. A few steps more and we are at the chapel."

"You must wait," I answered. "We are standing at the tomb of a martyr. No true Catholic can pass it by without a prayer." The guide looked rebuked, and slowly taking off his knitted cap, he sank as if unconsciously upon his knee. "Now lead us to the chapel. This has better prepared to enter it." A few steps more and turning a sharp corner we found ourselves at the door of a large room about fifteen feet square. Here in this little chapel hundreds of years ago the early Christians assembled to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I had read "Fabiola" when a boy, and now the pictures it suggests crowded upon my fancy. I could see the vener-

able white-haired bishop at the altar there, at his side a fervent young deacon, and around him bent in silent adoration were youthful men and maidens, like Sebastian and Cecilia, and those old and bent with care like Gorgonius and Palladius. Such thoughts as these filled my mind for the moment and carried me back through long centuries to the time when this little church was peopled with living saints. "See," said the guide; and lifting my eyes to the low ceiling I saw there a representation of Christ as the Good Shepherd. The dampness and smoke of the torches had done much to rob the picture of its distinctness of outline, but even yet could be clearly distinguished the figure of a shepherd carrying one of his flock upon his shoulders while others lay peacefully at his feet, suggesting Our Lord's own words, in the parable of the Lost Sheep, — "He layeth it upon his shoulders rejoicing," and those of the Psalmist, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

We passed out of the chapel into the passage again. As we moved along we stopped occasionally to examine rude figures traced upon the sides of the wall. The most common of these was the figure of a fish, taken to represent Christ, as the letters of the word Ichthus in Greek form the initials of the title, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. Another was the monogram ☧ for Christ.

After another long period our guide again came suddenly to a halt, and whispered for us to approach him. For a moment he stood, torch in hand, peering through the darkness down a long black alley that led at right angles to the one in which we stood. "What is it?" said I, surprised at the pained look on the old man's wrinkled face. "Tell us what is there that attracts your gaze in that direction." "Nothing," said the old man in

a whisper that echoed along the silent gallery. "Nothing. I never pass this spot without a feeling of sadness coming over me, and I stop to say an Ave for the poor young creatures. Did you never hear the tale? How strange! We all know it by heart here. It is a part of the history of the place. See there where that black wall blocks up the passage; well, it was beyond that they wandered round and round never to come back. Poor lads." "But what do you mean? What story? What poor lads? Come, tell us, guide." "Ah, well. Many years ago they came down into the tombs, three of them, three young students. The guide was a new one, and led them out of the regular path, away down there in the darkness. They had lost the track, and so traveling round and round in search of it they only left it farther and farther behind. After a while their little tapers were burnt out. They still continued to grope in the dark, until finally overcome by hunger, fatigue, and despair, they knelt down, all four of them on the cold wet ground, by the tomb of a martyr, and commending their souls to God calmly awaited death. It came, poor creatures! They were found many years after, four skeletons, upon the earth, and were buried under the martyrs' tomb where they had breathed their last. You see, they closed that passage up lest the awful event should ever be repeated. That is the story I have often heard from good Fra Felice when only a boy. I know it must be so; Brother Felix was such a learned man, and knew the Catacombs so well. And I know he never passed this spot without a prayer for the repose of their poor souls."

We afterwards learned that the old man's little story was not fiction.

Just here the lane grew wider, and we could walk

faster and with greater ease. At last we could discern the faintest possible gleam of light away at the end of the passage. It grew and grew into a bright spot as we advanced, and we felt we were approaching the opening through which we had entered. At last we could distinguish the stone steps. We mounted them, and the clear bright evening light in the blue Italian sky seemed never so cheerful and gladdening. The fields looked doubly green, and the trees and shrubs, and every wild flower at our feet, seemed to take on a new beauty. A lizard ran by us into the deep grass, and its spotted back glistened like a jewel in the sunlight. We returned from this subterranean city of the dead with a keener sense of the beauty of the world above it.

What must have been the joy and happiness of those saintly souls who, after spending years in its gloom and solitude, escaping from its narrow walls and low damp ceilings, suddenly entered the beautiful city of God, and beheld for the first time the transcendent radiance of the Sun of Justice!

CONFESSION

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CHARITY is the first law of Christianity. Its first precept is the love of God our Father; its second, the love of man our brother. This law, so simple, yet so sublime, can be traced throughout the whole economy of the New Law, in the magnanimity it inculcates and the grandness of character which it inspires. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" sums up the spirit of Judaism. "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good," is the epitome of the New Law. Justice was the most prominent feature of the Divinity as known to the followers of Moses. Mercy is the attribute of God most patent in the teachings of His Divine Son Christ.

Of this fact the scene, described in Holy Writ, of the woman taken in adultery, in the depth of its pathos, is a convincing illustration. Discovered in sin, she is brought by the Jews before Christ. This woman is an adulteress, and by the law deserves to be stoned. Conscious of her guilt and the justice of their accusation, she cowers, trembling and weeping, upon the ground, between the accusers and her judge. A thrill of terror seizes upon her as, stunned by the mere mention of the awful punishment, she stops her breath to hear the words that must consign her to her doom. But what is it she hears? She dare not look up, but she wonders what is meant as Christ turns to the hypocrites, whose hearts He reads and knows to be black with sin. "Let him who is with-

out sin among you cast the first stone." Something in the look He gives them brings shame even to their cheeks, and one by one they silently slink away. The two are left alone. One, the poor shrinking sinner upon the earth with the consciousness of her guilt; the other, standing above her, the all-pure and spotless Son of God. For a moment all is silence. Does the all-Holy God spurn her in anger and disgust? Does He open His lips to denounce and curse the sinner at His feet whose sin is so grievous and so known? Does He even steal silently away for fear of the contaminating effect of her very presence? No. At last He speaks: "Where are they who accused you — has no one condemned you?" She answers, "No, Lord." And then she hears the words of the Saviour of men, — "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." Behold the contrast. The men whose souls are dyed in guilt stand before Christ seeking the death of a sinner. And Christ, who as God is the one offended, as man, sinless, with one word forgives her all. This scene gives us the keynote to the whole economy of Christianity. It is written on every page of Christ's history, from the parable of the prodigal who is welcomed back to the home he has deserted; whose ingratitude is forgotten in the feasting and gladness that celebrate his penitent return, to the words upon the cross to the penitent thief, — "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

We recognize the same teaching when He tells us that before offering our gift at the altar we must first be reconciled to our brother. He makes our acceptance of this teaching the measure of God's forgiveness, as in the prayer we repeat daily, where He bids us ask to be forgiven our sins as we forgive others. It is not for once or seven times, but, as Christ Himself has commanded,

"till seventy times seven times," that is, always. It is the lesson we gather to-day from both the epistle and the gospel. In the former we are reminded that our plain duty is to be merciful and forgiving to those who injure us, for "Revenge is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay"; and in the latter we are shown the example of God Himself in the healing of leprosy, which is ever in the Scriptures the type and figure of sin. The whole scene foreshadows that sacrament through which Christ was to continue by His Church till the end of time that work of pardon and mercy which characterized His life, — the Sacrament of Penance.

"Go show yourself to the priest" was the command of Christ as He healed the leper. And in the New Law the sinner must comply with the same condition if he would be freed from his sin. By this command Christ was preparing the future generations of His Church to understand that mystery of pardon and forgiveness administered by the priests. It was the prelude to the establishment of the great second baptism, — that remedy which, applied through the ministry of His priests, was to take away the awful taint of spiritual leprosy, and bring back health and beauty to the disfigured soul.

It is now about three centuries since that renegade to his faith and apostate to his religion, Luther, proclaimed with blasphemous voice that the Sacrament of confession was but an intolerable burden invented by the priests and needlessly borne by the members of the Roman Church, and from that day the impious and sacrilegious have never ceased to reproduce that cunning lie which fifteen centuries of free profession and regular observance ought to be sufficient to contradict. We, my dearly beloved brethren, have heard the old falsehood,

and perhaps we have been angry with ourselves because although heartily repudiating it, and firmly believing the truth, yet we have been unable to recall the proper reasons for maintaining it. In a question of such importance as this every Catholic should be able, even for his own satisfaction, to confirm his faith by reason. Now what are the principal proofs of the divine institution of this great Sacrament?

The ministers of the Christian religion are the successors direct or indirect of the Apostles. They receive their power of preaching and administration, not from the people, nor from themselves. It is transmitted to them in undying succession from those holy twelve to whom Christ said, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." The ordinary powers conferred upon them by Christ for the edification and maintenance of the Church, and the economy entrusted to them for the salvation of souls, were to be the same in all times, and were to descend upon their successors in the same measure as they themselves had received them. They were not to live forever. They were, like their Master, to leave the field of their labors for the eternal reward prepared for their faithful service. But the world was to go on. Men would still be sinners. There would still, therefore, be the same need for the application of Christ's merits in the final century as in the first. This Christ Himself amply provided for when He said, "Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world." That is, the power that I give you now is to be exercised by your successors in the Church, which I found upon you until the end of time.

Their powers, therefore, were to continue in the keeping of the priests of that Church forever, even as the water of

the stream flows on from the high mountain source down through the hills or through winding valleys to the sea, fertilizing, refreshing, gladdening, blessing the whole length and breadth of the land through which it flows. If, therefore, Christ conferred upon His Apostles this great unspeakable power of forgiving sins, that same power must be found in the ministers of His Church to-day and forever.

Do we find among the privileges conferred upon the twelve such a power? If words have any meaning, if the Scripture is the word of God, if the Son of God spoke the truth, then there can be but one answer to this question, — one answer that is plain to every thinking man who understands what he reads, and is candid and honest with himself in professing what he understands.

If any one will open the Bible at the twentieth chapter of St. John he will read these words, — "Again he said to them, Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you: and when he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Again let him turn to the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew and read the following addressed to the Apostles: "Amen, I say to you, Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven: And whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven." What meaning would these words naturally have to the mind of any honest and fair man, whose intelligence had not been warped by previous bias or perverted by prejudice? Put that text in the hands of a child and ask him what it means, and he will answer you as every man of reason will, it means exactly what

it says: that whenever the apostles forgive sins on earth or retain them unforgiven, that same sentence is ratified in heaven. It is as clear as the light of day, and willing or unwilling, the meaning forces itself upon every one, unless we close our eyes to the light and our hearts to the truth.

Suppose that Christ really did wish to confer this power upon the Apostles, how could He have done so more explicitly than in these words? Did Christ then intend to deceive both us and His beloved twelve? While He was saying these words, did He pretend to be giving them something, while all the time He was doing nothing of the sort? This would, indeed, be blasphemy. To what do Protestants appeal for the power they claim to preach and baptize? Is it not to the words, "Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them," etc.? And if they take His words in that place for what they mean, then why do they in a similar instance persist in distorting them here? Since they depend alone upon the Bible as their rule of faith, as moderately reasonable men they ought at least to be consistent and read the words as they stand, and not take them literally when they support their tenets, and figuratively when they conflict with their doctrine. For that is not modeling religion upon the Bible, as they so often boast of doing, but "deceitfully handling" the Bible to suit their religion.

If we wish to make ourselves absolutely sure of the meaning of these words, let us look at the history of the Christian Church. Usage or custom is always the best interpreter of the law. When a lawyer has any doubt as to the meaning of any particular statute or regulation, he searches the record of decisions upon cases affected

by the same law, and bases his opinion upon prescription. It is the same as regards the meaning of the Bible. The practice of the Church is a sure interpreter of the doctrine of Christ. Now in this case what does the practice of the Christian Church reveal to us? Has she in her history recognized or not this power of forgiveness of sins? Every page of her history, every century of her existence, every church in her pale, cries out, Yes, most unmistakably, Yes! The authority of a practice that has prevailed in the Church from her very origin must be assured beyond all possibility of cavil, particularly if that Church is by divine promise preserved from all error in belief and doctrine.

Open the pages of all the great and learned men that stand preëminent in all the Churches, not only of Rome, but of Constantinople, of Africa, of Syria, of Egypt, and of France from the earliest days of Christianity. Who will be able to tell us whether or not the primitive Christians believed in confession? Upon whom shall we rely for correct information about the practice of the Church if not on Origen of Egypt and Tertullian of Carthage, and Cyprian, who all lived within three hundred years after Christ? On Ambrose and Augustine, who lived in 430? Bede, who lived in 700? St. Bernard, who lived in 1100? And St. Thomas, who lived a century later, and whose works on theology are the standard for Catholic theologians of the present day? Who, then, is Luther that in the face of this universal testimony he should stand up and proclaim that confession was an invention of the priests? And how is it that he only found it out when he found it impossible to go to confession himself, when he became a renegade and a demagogue, and was cut off from the sacraments of the Church by

excommunication? How is it that even among many of those Churches in the East which are separated from the Holy See, either by schism or heresy, we still find the constant belief and practice of this Sacrament? We find it among the schismatics of Syria, Armenia, and of the Greek Church in Russia, who, although they have forsaken the unity of the Church, have yet preserved intact the number and character of the sacraments, and not least that of Penance.

Lastly, reason shows that this doctrine must have come from Christ Himself. Either Christ established it as a part of the economy of His Church, or some one invented it and imposed it upon the members of the Church. One or the other of these two must be admitted. If one is false the other must be true. If it is false that it is an imposition, then it must be true that Christ founded it. But how is it possible that it was instituted by any other person than Christ? Confession is not, by its very nature, an agreeable duty to anybody. To tell our faults to another man, to open to him the innermost secrets of our souls, to expose to him our failings and vices, to disclose to him the guilt that men would rather hide even from their own sight, is this a task that men relish? Is it an action of such a nature that men would easily submit to unless one of the highest authority commanded it? Is it possible that such a task should be imposed upon the Church by any man without its creating such a stir that the name of him who first enforced it, and the time and place where it was first imposed, should be most prominent in the history of the Church?

We know the names of those who framed the different creeds, and where they first were used. We can give the

dates and names of the different Popes who have added even as much as a word to the canon of the Mass. How would it be possible, therefore, that the name of him who established this custom of confession, certainly a matter of wider and more intense interest than this, should not have been somewhere recorded, or at least handed down in tradition? And yet, struggle as they may, search and study and inquire as they will who for three hundred years have persistently striven to calumniate the origin of this holy sacrament, they have never yet been able to discover anybody else to be its founder than Our Lord Himself.

Would it be possible that any lay member of the Church should be its originator? Absurd. We all know how difficult it is even now, with our firm and unshaken belief in the divine origin of this Sacrament and its necessity, to persuade Christians to frequent it, even when it is prescribed by the Church. Could it happen that any member of the Church would dare to prescribe it as a novelty without any deeper sentiment to inspire the people to its obedience than his own word? Could it be possible that any of the clergy, high or low in authority, could prescribe it? Equally absurd. First of all, if it were the clergy, one would reasonably expect that they would exempt themselves from such an obligation, and yet no one, not even the Pope himself, is free from it, for he, even as the lowest and humblest in the Church, must kneel for absolution and forgiveness. Secondly, for what reason would the clergy invent such an obligation? Think for a moment of the duties of a confessor, and then answer. His most serious attention must be devoted for several years to a particular branch of study to prepare him, even tolerably, for this duty; a study

which he is bound in conscience to continue all his life. He binds himself to suffer death rather than reveal one sin confessed to him. To sit for hours listening to the tales of others' sins and troubles; to rise at all hours of the night to run to the bedside of some dying penitent to pronounce over him the words of absolution, even though he risk his life by the disease, such as fever or cholera, with which that penitent is afflicted; certainly, my friends, these are the only benefits which the priest derives from this so-called self-imposed task. Ah, if they who call the confessional an invention of the priests knew the story of Borromeo in the midst of the plague of Milan, or Quelen in the midst of the cholera in Paris, or thousands of others in the midst of every form of contagious and loathsome disease, they would be rather dumb with admiration of such heroism, and cry out that only God could impose a duty that entailed such self-sacrifice.

It is clear, then, that no one, either cleric or layman, could or would by any possibility invent such an institution, which, according to such hypothesis, would be a most unheard-of burden without any conceivable advantage to be obtained. The supposition is as absurd and ridiculous as it is false and blasphemous. It proves conclusively the bigoted inconsistency of those who advance it. It is contrary to the plain and obvious meaning of Christ's words. It contradicts the manifest history of the Church in all ages. It is plainly opposed to reason and common sense, and they who put forward this allegation in opposition to the True Catholic Church would call destitute of all intelligence any one who should reason in the same manner upon any other conceivable topic where reason and not prejudice was concerned. Certainly if there is any one power that the Christian minister should possess,

it is this of the forgiving of sins, and he who disclaims it for himself by that very fact acknowledges that he has no claim to the name of a true minister of the Church.

It is easy to see why some men would seek to banish from the earth the confessional and the priests who exercise this great power. It is not hard to understand the hatred that has been directed in all times against this most holy institution of our Church. Are there not some who hate to hear the very name of God? Are there not men who would persuade themselves if they could, and use every effort to persuade others, that there is no God? For when a man rises up in rebellion against a law that holds his brutish passions in check, he would, if he could, annihilate the Law-giver. The name of God is intolerable to this wretch because it reminds him of his guilt and the punishment that it merits; and half in fear, half in anger, he cries out, There is no God!

The confessional is the great bridle of man's passions. It curbs as with a bit of steel his vices and evil habits. To the dishonest man it says, Restore to their lawful owner every penny of your ill-gotten goods; and if he refuses, he cannot, until he changes, receive in it the absolution that he craves. To the vicious man it says, Desist from all this wickedness; and if he hears not, but persists in the vices the Church condemns, he will be turned from her doors until he returns sincerely repentant. Is it a wonder that they who hate the very name of restraint, who wish to be their own masters in vice, who are too bound up in guilt and iniquity to ask for pardon, should bring to bear upon this purifier of morals, this savior of society, this defender of purity, this champion of honesty, all the hatred and insults and calumny and infamy that Satan bears against God Himself?

But while its enemies rail and storm against it, there it stands. Ask the penitent sinner, whom it has changed from the ravenous wolf into the lamb, of its blessings. Ask him who groans under the weight of temptation day by day what strength and courage it brings him to resist. Ask the repentant sinner filled with remorse and grief for the past what consolation it has brought his stormy soul, what quiet and restfulness and peace of mind and heart he has found in it. Ask the worried and perplexed of the counsels it has given them and the advice they have received from it. Ask your own hearts of the sacred peace and holy joy with which they have been filled, as you have left the narrow confines of the confessional with the hope and confidence that you have received there, and the strength and resolution with which you again set forth to do what is right and conquer evil.

And now one final word. You are Catholics. These arguments which you have heard to-day are not intended to give faith, but to confirm it. To you the Sacrament of Penance is no subject of speculation or doubt. It is as much a part of your faith as God is; for it is the perpetual abiding presence of the forgiving Christ among us. Confession is to you a sacred article of your faith. You understand its necessity. You recognize its importance. You admit and extol its benefits. Yet, do you act as if you did? How often do you approach it? How frequently do you avail yourselves of it? When the voices of others are raised against it your heart beats fast and your blood boils in indignation: and meanwhile you act as though what they said were true. You see the scales of the leprosy fall from your fellow man at the touch of the healer Christ, and you stand by covered from head to foot with the same loathsome disease, and never as

much as say, Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean. Perhaps it is years since you have felt its saving virtue. Perhaps Easter after Easter has been allowed to go by, unheeded, unnoticed, and meanwhile sin upon sin has been heaped up, crime upon crime follow each other in quick succession, until the very sight of your soul is as a plague before the eyes of God's angels, and every one of them is a voice crying out to heaven for vengeance; what is it that holds God's arm in mercy from striking you down as you are? and if He should, you know what would await you. Ah, it is His boundless love for you. It is His mercy, His infinite tender mercy, that stands between your sins and His Justice. But do not deceive yourselves. God will not wait forever. Are you sure that this warning which you have received to-day will not be the last that He is to send you. If you reject this who is to compel Him to send you another grace which you may refuse as you do this one to-day? Awake good Christians. You have been sleeping upon the very brink of the awful precipice of death and you know it not. Listen to God's voice that sounds in your ears; listen and resolve now at last to obey it. "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you." Arise from this lethargy worse than death. Go show yourselves to the priest. Kneel at the feet of Christ in the sacred tribunal of Penance, and hear from the lips of His minister those words that will fill your heart with holy thanksgiving, — "Thy sins are forgiven thee: Go in peace and sin no more."

CAUSES OF IRRELIGION

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

How truly Christ has said that they who are of His flock know the sound of His voice and follow Him, but that they who are not of His Sheepfold know Him not. Speak to the Pharisee of the cure of bodily ills, of the gift of temporal blessings and prosperity; tell him of lands flowing with milk and honey, of the increase of the fruits of the earth, of the plenteous rain, and the warming sun that makes the fields blossom and bear fruit a thousandfold; tell him the rewards of righteousness are a long life, family happiness, the strong growth of sons and daughters, that the just shall possess the land, and the Divine mercy shall descend upon the third and fourth generation of them that fear God, and he accepts it all as Divine truth, undoubting, secure. To him such doctrines need no demonstration. They appeal, he would doubtless say, to common sense, to justice, and to reason. But speak to him of the hidden and inscrutable ways of God; question him concerning the invisible, screened beyond the ken of mortal man, veiled in mysterious secrecy which no human eye can penetrate; ask him of the inner, spiritual graces bestowed by the Creator; of blessings that seem only privations; of rewards that seem but punishments; of favors that often touch the soul only by wounding the body, and he is dumb, with the astonishment of one who hears with the ears but understands not with the heart; or if his tongue be loosed to speak,

it is only to revile that which his stubborn heart cannot take in, even as the Pharisees of to-day's gospel, hearing Christ's merciful pardon of sin, could only find one word of refutation, one means of denial, "he blasphemeth." The mystery of the forgiveness of sin to the sick man brings joy beyond expression; to the proud, self-sufficient, stony-hearted Pharisee it brings only anger and resentment, which in due time will bear their fruit; for they will murder Him who came to save the world; they will send Him to the infamous gibbet, whose only crime was that He did good.

That the paralytic should be cured, that he should arise and walk in the full enjoyment of health, the Pharisee could tolerate. It was a fact plainly visible. It appealed to his senses. He saw it, and was unmoved. But the spiritual healing from the paralysis of sin, only typified and guaranteed by the healing of the body, he would not understand. It was too much. He could not see it, therefore it was not true. It was hidden from his eyes, therefore he refused to credit it.

The Pharisee is the type of all those who would limit the powers of an Almighty Being to the narrow boundaries of mortal vision. Behold the man of two thousand years ago and the man of to-day who forbids the supreme intelligence to know more than the petty range of knowledge which his human mind can span. Behold the fool, for so Scripture calls him, who madly tries to bound the infinitude of the Eternal by the narrow compass of his puny brain. This man, who stands upon the ocean's shore and cries to the rolling waters, "This far shalt thou come and no farther," and the breakers only laugh and flow onward, would insolently stem the torrent of His power and knowledge who compassed the

ocean with the wreath of sands and with the rocks that limit its bed. O Unbelief, thy name is madness!

If the royal prophet in the midst of his sorrows and tribulations at the sight of his people falling away from their allegiance to their God and the ever-increasing disorders that follow in the wake of unbelief and irreligion cried out in grief to God, "Save me, O God, for there is now no Saint; truths are decayed from among the children of men;" so well may the faithful Christian to-day echo that same cry. For in what day was that lamentation truer than in ours? Truth, indeed, seems vanished. Everything that is supernatural, spiritual, and divine is made the butt of contradiction and reviling. Materialism rules the day. The heavens are but the firmament of the stars; the soul is but an outgrowth of the body; sin is a fault against manners; God Himself is only an impersonal force, a sort of necessary energy. Death is a sleep, and the future life the flimsiest of dreams. Such are the so-called views of modern times; views of cultivated men whose opinions are supposed to be of some value; views of men who from the high places look down upon the benighted people of their time and would shed upon them the lustre and light of teachings from which even the pagan philosophers would turn in disgust.

God help the night when the day is as dark as they make it! Alas for the fruits that are nurtured to maturity by such a sun. The reason for this is the absence of faith, that bright beacon which stops not among the stars, but penetrates beyond into the very dwelling-place of God, and makes manifest not only human life and action, human thought and experience, but even the very secrets of God Himself; it penetrates beyond the tomb, and shows us with its clear steady light

the life beyond the grave; and thus when the earth has closed over the lifeless bodies of those we loved, it clothes them with purer and more real existence. It is the absence of this light that is driving virtue, nobility of character, Christianity itself, from the earth.

But why speak of the want of faith to those who are professedly Christians? Are we not Catholics? Do we not believe in God, in Christ and His Church? Ah, my friends, is it possible that you are not aware that faith can be lost? That many even of our day have already lost the faith, and that thousands even now are dropping out of the number of the faithful, either directly contradicting the teachings of the Church, or by their lives practically ignoring them? Is it possible that you are unaware that hundreds of those who have been washed in the saving waters of Baptism, anointed with the oil of Confirmation, and who have been nourished even with the Body and Blood of Christ Himself, have turned their backs upon the fond Mother who reared them up to God, have closed their ears to her counsels, yea, even have stood up in all the shamelessness and cowardice of a rebellious son and smitten that Mother in the face and soiled her garments in the sight of her enemies? No, you cannot be ignorant of this. You all have seen this spectacle, and perhaps have shuddered at the sight. You may perhaps even now recall the miscreant's name. Truly an awful crime before God and men is this crime of an unnatural son. Yes, my dearly beloved, irreligion is rife among even those who ought to be Christians. It is not, perhaps, professed infidelity, but a practical want of that becoming Christian spirit, without which one calls himself Christian or Catholic in vain.

As it is the duty of a good financier when he sees his

business interests on the wane to investigate the reasons for its decline; of the public-spirited man and the statesman who beholds the national prosperity diminishing to look around for the causes of the trouble in the affairs of the commonwealth; of a health commission when it is evident that the state of public health is not what it ought to be to make inquiries into the sanitary conditions of the people, so is it evident to all that they who interest themselves in the spiritual progress and morality of a people must by equal right and more urgent necessity study carefully those causes or conditions which make it manifest that religion is suffering. For although there be men who esteem it a greater calamity that a business house should fail, or an epidemic should gain ground, than that eternal souls should suffer an eternal loss, yet there are enough who still would ask with Christ, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" What, then, are the causes of the lack of religion, of practical piety and faith, in the people of our day, of those about us and of ourselves?

We cannot investigate all the causes in the short time we have to devote to it. The question is long and complicated, though by no means uninteresting. We must confine our investigation here to a few of the most obvious, though not the most radical causes.

The influence of the home life for good or evil upon the religious life of the community cannot be overestimated. The influences that are brought to bear upon our minds as children cannot quite be annihilated even by the roughest contact with the storms of life and bitter experiences of the world. We can never quite forget the scenes of quiet peace and Christian happiness which made home so dear a place in youth, and for man-

hood so hallowed a memory, when we have gone from it forever, or they who formed its sacred circle are long since gone to the better home, or are scattered abroad, separated in life's interests and life's employments. The most hardened sinner, the most forsaken wretch, at the thought of the Christian home of his early years must feel ashamed of his guilt, and wish that he were pure and good as when his mother, now gray and worn with grief for his waywardness, made him kneel beside her and ask God to keep him from danger.

Only a short time ago, in the cold cheerless cells of one of our state prisons, a man lay dying. He was known to be one of the most hardened criminals of his time. There was no crime in which he had not steeped himself; and as his reformation was hopeless he was sentenced to prison for life. Even there he was recognized as a dangerous man, and even his fellow prisoners avoided him. He was at length seized with a fatal illness, and at last lay dying, friendless, alone, a criminal. His condition thus pitiful seemed but to make him all the more hardened. In vain those about him implored him to relent and die at least in peace with God; all in vain. Finally, the priest knelt by his bed and began to say aloud the Lord's Prayer. He watched the dying man as he prayed. At first his face was as unmoved as if it were of stone. But soon a cloud as if of pain convulsed his features; a deep sob escaped his lips, two large teardrops stood in his eyes and then slowly trickled down his rough, worn cheeks; one hand slowly sought the other and finally clasped it. "Pray for us sinners," continued the priest; and at last, at last that tongue was loosed, and the man whispered in low fervent tones, "now and at the hour of our death, Amen." He gasped, and they

thought he was dying. He reached his wasted arm and caught the priest convulsively. The priest leaned over him, and the prisoner between sobs from a breaking heart whispered these words, "My mother taught me that prayer when I was a boy. I left her fifteen years ago for a life of crime. Tell her I said it before I died." The hand relaxed, the head sank back upon the pillow, a quiver shook the frame. The priest held the crucifix to the man's lips, large tears fell upon it as he kissed it. A moment of awful oppressive silence. He was dead. The memory of his mother had saved him.

No one but God can tell how often the thought of that influence, so sacred, has stood up before men in temptation and helped them to gain the victory. But when the memory of home is otherwise, when it is remembered only as a den of disorder where God's name was uttered only in anger and blasphemy; where no prayer was ever heard or taught; where the Church and all religious matters were mentioned only to be scoffed at or ridiculed; where there was naught but quarreling and strife, and perhaps drunkenness to fill the measure of iniquity, who can wonder that they who have felt such influences in early life, who have spent their youth in such surroundings, should go down, deeper and deeper, into the sink of sin, should give up the Church with all its sacred influences, fall away from religion, lose faith in man and then in God, and after a life of wickedness and shame die in awful despair?

Woe to the parents who thus betray the trust God has confided to them! With care and vigilance and prayer and constant watchfulness they should have guided their offspring up to God, looked after their religious training, showed them the example of a Christian life.

But instead they have neglected all this; nay, more, they have taught them the ways of vice; and the irreligion of the parents brings forth fruit a thousandfold in the infidelity of their children. With all the solicitude that Christian parents can take to make their children attentive to their religious duties, they will often find the task most difficult. Do even the best parents, with the greatest care for the home, always succeed in warding off the awful bane of irreligion? How, then, can it be expected that where no care is exercised, conscience, duty, religion will gain any lasting root? Oh, it must make the angels weep to see the little ones grow up into maturity while every day deeper and deeper the cancer of unbelief eats into their hearts and minds, until nothing pure or dutiful remains; but only the foul stench of hardened conscience and evil doing.

Truly, when such parents appear before the Eternal Judge on the Last Day to give an account of the children whose guardians He made them that they might teach them to love and serve Him, they will fall upon their faces and call upon the mountains to cover them from God's wrath. By what right will they stand upon the right side, if those children through their neglect and bad example are lost eternally, and are there upon the left among the eternally accursed? Think of it in time, you who are parents. Do not lay up a double share of wrath for yourselves against that day.

Another obvious cause of the lack of true Catholic spirit is pride, of the stupidest and most ignoble kind; for it is the pride of ignorance. It is most singular that in these days of boasted enlightenment, when undoubtedly so much has been achieved in practical science, so little should be known of what is really valuable science.

If you remember, St. Paul, in the epistle which I have just read to you, thanks God because the Corinthians were rich in all utterance and all knowledge. They were rich because the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. And yet this very knowledge of Christ and His Church is of all sciences the least known. It is most astonishing how little is known by the so-called learned men of our day of the true nature of the Catholic Church; of its belief; of its traditions; of its claims; of its history. How truly De Maistre says that all history of the last three hundred years, especially concerning the Church, is a grand conspiracy against the truth. Take up any book of our times that pretends to touch ever so lightly upon the Church, and you are struck at the woeful ignorance of even its most prominent features. You look at the author's name. He is well known and recognized as an able man. And yet here before your eyes are blunders, that even a child would blush to be guilty of. Some call it misrepresentation. It may be. But to be charitable we will call it ignorance. These authors attain a reputation, and their works are read widely. They may be books of travel; they may be scientific books; they may be simply romances. They are read; a great part of the reading public lets others think for them. Their contents are swallowed, and then the readers, filled with such information, think they have done their duty, and expect to be considered well informed. Not one opinion has been challenged, not one sentiment sifted. It is bolted whole, and swallowed with a gulp. Such books as these have undone untold numbers of unsuspecting victims. Among them are many, very many, of the present generation of Catholic youth. Through such spectacles their religion is viewed. Indifference, then cold-

ness, then aversion, may be the consequence. Their early training is set down as old-fashioned, out of style. They begin to wonder now how they could have remained in ignorance so long, and in their self-satisfied opinion of themselves they laugh at their former credulity. Conceited children! they forget that history is a narration of facts, not a romance; that as it has its foundation in reality, in the real past, and not in an author's imagination, it must be verified authentically by proofs other than the mere word of any author. So often when they think themselves most enlightened they are merely toying with knowledge.

Every student of history knows that the loftiest of characters, the noblest specimens of humanity that this earth has seen, have been humble and docile children of the Catholic Church; that the very civilization of Europe, the cultivation of the arts, the pursuit of the sciences have been her care; that the greatest intellects and most towering minds have knelt devoutly before those altars upon which this poor deluded youth turns his back. Yes, it is only ignorance that can make any member of the Church ashamed of her. They who know her best serve her most gladly. They who have studied her most thoroughly are proudest to do her honor.

It is a pitiable sight to see a youth turn his head as a priest passes, lest he should be compelled to recognize him, and thus make known that he is a Catholic; or hang his head as he passes the church instead of lifting his hat respectfully to Christ present there; or yet worse, avoid being present at the Mass or divine service, or at confession, or at the altar rail, because he has a mistaken notion of what should be to him as clear as the sun; because in his ignorance he fails to under-

stand that what he considers a humiliation should be his greatest pride. If when he had left the Sunday-school he had interested himself in the real history of his Church; if he had made himself acquainted with her achievements in the past, and her strength and unity in the present; if he had studied her glory from her work, and made himself familiar with her position in the world from reliable sources, he would be foremost in the ranks of her defenders, and his pride and anxiety for her would only increase his faith, augment his fervor, ennoble his character, and make him not the unstable, unprincipled, credulous waverer, but a stanch, honorable, unflinching church-man. And this not in profession of words only, but in the exercise of his religion, in the carrying out consistently that exterior obedience to her laws which is prompted by true faith and sincere conviction.

How true it is that many are irreligious through ignorance, and the Church is robbed of many a one who would be a zealous and faithful servant, because while she stands before the nations a pillar of strength, a tower of wisdom and grandeur, appealing to all to come and learn her true character, her own children too often take their counsel from every one but from her who is best able to give it.

Therefore, Catholic parents, if you would bequeath to your children that most precious of all gifts, without which whatever else you leave them will be poor indeed; if you would give to them that which ennobles life and sanctifies death, that which lifts them above the mere sordid, mercenary doctrines of the age to understand the true value of their own souls, that which establishes for them true principles of action, true honor, true man-

hood; if you would discharge well the high privilege entrusted to you, and for which you must one day render an account, look to the proper training of your children in your homes. Beware lest any word be dropped in the presence of those little ones that would in any degree blight the tender seedling of religious truth implanted in their hearts. These little ones are witnesses of your life. As yours is, so it may be expected theirs will be. Woe to him who bends the pliant sapling and fastens its shooting branches to earth, instead of teaching it to grow upwards towards God and Heaven. The future hope of the Church is in your hands. If it is blighted, yours is the blame. Remember, and tremble as you do, the awful threat which even the gentle Lord Christ uttered against those who scandalize one of His little ones, — "It were better that a millstone were tied about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

And you, Catholic youth, cast aside the foolish, empty pride and conceit that hold you back from what you know to be your duty. Freedom is the boon which is now so highly praised. Be free, if you will, as the wind that blows and breathes over hill and vale; free as the sunshine that fills the universe; free as the ocean that flows from pole to pole; but remember even the elements obey God's voice. Will you be more stubborn than they? Study the glory of your religion, and it will make you noble; for as a son you may participate in the honor of your Mother; but only on condition that you are a faithful and dutiful, not a renegade and neglectful son of the One True Church. Enlighten your minds with real knowledge; then, indeed, shall you be rich in all utterance. Imitate those who believed not the Scribe

who only scoffed. Remember that you are stamped with the character and seal of Christ. By fidelity to it, by the practice and profession of your faith, you are entitled to a share in the Kingdom of your Father. If you forfeit it by irreligion you forfeit that which no gold can purchase, your salvation, for that is the gift of God, who with it made you His child here and His co-heir hereafter. Even though you succeed in banishing Christ and His religion from your life, you can never die without them. The pale patient Face of Christ will meet your eyes upon your death-bed, and you will realize that in another moment you must face Him as your Judge. You may fancy that you can do without this Church during life; but you will find that you must turn to it desperately at last in death.

Let your homes be pure; let them breathe the spirit of the Christian religion and of Christian virtue, that they may inspire real Christian character in your children. Teach your sons to stand firm in the Faith they have received, to be jealous of the maintenance of their birthright; constant in principle; true to their own manhood, and fearless in the outward manifestation of their Religion, then will the Church stand secure let come what will.

THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

To-day is the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph. To-day the Church wishes to show by the devotion of her children the confidence she feels in the protection of the chaste spouse of our Blessed Lady and the foster-father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever all over the face of the earth the faithful children of the Church assemble to offer the clean oblation to God, there shall the name of Joseph be spoken in benediction; his praises shall be sounded, his virtues exalted, and his protection claimed. Even as Christ dying upon Calvary bequeathed to all humanity Mary as its Mother, so the Church has given to all men as a Father the Spouse of Mary, the Blessed St. Joseph.

If the children of the Church all over the world dedicate this day to his name, if they lift aloft their voices in his praise, how much more ought we his special charge, under his especial care, dedicated to his honor in an especial manner, to-day thank God for so powerful a protector, so great a patron. Yes, my dear friends, we owe this heavenly friend of ours a special meed of praise, a special measure of thanks, a special grant of confidence, and to God peculiar gratitude that He has willed to grant us such a patron and protector of our parish, of our homes, of our lives, and of our souls.

We have but to call to mind the intimate union that existed between Christ and Joseph, the important part he played in the plan of the Redemption, the position he

held in the Holy Family, his brief history in the gospel narrative, to understand why the Church holds his name first in love and veneration after the Sacred Names of Jesus and Mary; why she places him so high in the catalogue of Saints, and points to him as the universal steward of God's graces and blessings. Let us to-day, by thus calling to mind his claims upon our love, our veneration, and our confidence, endeavor to increase in our souls a greater devotion to our Patron, that God may be "glorified in his Saints" and we may partake more fully of that protection for which as dutiful children we may look from so kind a Father.

Every true Christian loves and venerates the name of Mary the Mother of Christ. How should he not then love and venerate the husband and guardian of that most Holy Virgin, the foster-father and tutor of her Divine Son? If to Mary, as Christ's Mother, we owe the pure and holy Body of our God and Saviour, was it not Joseph who by the patient and humble work of his hands won the bread that sustained that Body, and the raiment with which that Body was clothed? Did he not side by side with Mary in the humble home watch over the couch of the Divine Infant, and guard him in his baby-hood? Did he not with Mary guide in their baby walks the little feet that were afterwards to travel up Calvary and be nailed to the cross for us? Did he not with Mary enjoy all that untold and unutterable privilege of life together with the Son of God at Nazareth? Oh, what must have been the sanctity of Joseph who spent so many years in this blessed companionship! No man, to whom was vouchsafed such holy influences, could help becoming a great Saint. What, then, of him who is called in the Gospel a "just man"?

The gospel narrative emphasizes one quality of St. Joseph's character which manifests itself most plainly; which rendered him so fitting an instrument in the hands of God to carry out His plans; which made him so easy to mould to accomplish the divine designs. It shines brightest of all his virtues, and may be taken as the summing-up of his holy characteristics. It is his absolute forgetfulness of self in complete submission of his will to the Will of God. Evidently his daily, hourly prayer, manifest in every act of his life, was, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When the Angel announced to Mary the inestimable privilege which God had destined for her of being the Mother of God, at first her great humility made her hesitate, but afterwards her submission to God's Will triumphed over her humility, and she spoke the words that made Redemption possible: "Be it done unto me according to thy word." In honor and dishonor, in glory as in humiliations, her soul was ever ready to abide by God's Will. What wonder, then, that he who was destined to be the reputed father of Mary's Son, and her own chaste spouse, should also win his title to so great a distinction by this absolute conformity to God's Will, by his constant readiness to listen to God's voice, by his eagerness, in the face of what would to others appear insurmountable obstacles, to carry into execution each expression of that Will, by his implicit trust in its commands, however obscure at the time their cause or purpose might appear? Leaving aside, then, for the present his other many and great virtues that make him stand preëminent among the Saints, let us consider him to-day in this light alone, as the model of trust in Divine Providence and submission to God's Will.

It is one of the inexplicable inconsistencies of our daily lives that being Christians, and believing that God is our most kind and loving Father, who created us for Himself, for an eternity of happiness, who gives and conserves life in us, without whom we cannot exist, whom we know to desire only our good, who ordains everything for our salvation, we act as if we distrusted God, as if we were suspicious of His designs or diffident as to His purposes. If we were at all consistent with our professed belief, where would be this murmuring at our present state of life, this discontent at what we call fate, this uncurbed desire to leap with one bound the limits of the circumstances which surround us, and free ourselves of all those duties and restraints which our faith teaches us are so many instruments in the hands of Providence to carry into execution the plans of God in our behalf? Why are we so foolish as to wish to wrest from the hands of Him, whom we believe to know better than ourselves what is for our good, the shaping of our lives and the fulfilling of our destinies? Because our lives belie our faith. While we pretend to believe in a God who is a Father and a friend, we persist in treating Him with the suspicion and lack of trust that only an enemy deserves. With a foolish presumption, born of pride and nourished by vanity, we set up our own will against God's Blessed Will, and while uttering with our lips the prayer, "Thy will be done," we are in our hearts still willfully scheming how to baffle the execution of that Will in our own lives.

Not such was Joseph's faith and confidence in God's care; not such his prompt and unquestioning obedience to God's Will. Consider this holy patriarch as he stands perplexed at the miracle wrought in the sacred person

of his holy Spouse Mary at the time of the Conception of the Son of God. One word from above, one sign that what to him at first seemed Mary's sin was really Mary's greatest glory, the privilege of the Divine Maternity, and Joseph at once, without one moment's further doubt or hesitation, dismisses from his mind all suspicion, and from his heart all feeling of resentment. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," was all that to this man of ready faith was necessary; for immediately, increased love, respect, veneration, dispelled suspicion, distrust, fear. From that moment no doubt ever again darkened the sunlight of his faith. Heaven had in one word assured him of the Divine Birth of the Child, that Mary's Son was to be the Emmanuel, and ever after he must have looked upon her as the chosen vessel of God's love. He asked no further proof. He desired no further sign. God had spoken; that was sufficient for his obedient heart. He only breathed the same constant prayer, "Thy will be done."

Behold him again in the flight into Egypt. The crafty, jealous king, anxious lest Christ the new King of Israel should live, orders the execution of all the male children of two years and under. The all-watchful eye of the Eternal Father looked from on high upon the peril to the life of His Beloved Son. Here the ready faith and quick obedience of our Saint rescues from danger the Little Infant whose heavenly birth he had shielded from the reproach and scoffing of the doubting world. In the dead silence of the night, by a vision from heaven the warning was delivered to Mary's spouse: "Arise, Joseph, and take the child and His Mother and flee into Egypt." How peremptory the command. No time for preparations for so long and tedious a journey.

"Arise and fly." Consider what this meant to him. He himself weary and fatigued by the labors of the previous day, aroused from the sleep that might have given him strength for this new trial; Mary, tender, delicate maid but just now a mother, whom it would seem, in all naturalness, studied cruelty to ask to travel any distance or to undergo further hardships; the Babe so very young and helpless. To take these and leaving Bethlehem where at least they had rest and shelter, leaving friends and all they loved, to travel for days and nights on and on, over river and plain, over mountain and valley into the land of the stranger, among faces unknown; to live amid a strange people with strange customs and strange manners; away from everything that to a couple so poor that made life at all worth living. This was implied in those few words. How he was to accomplish this flight, he knew not. Why this warning should come in the night, he knew not. How was Mary to undergo all this? How was the babe to endure it all? Why into Egypt, so far, so perilous a journey? How long were they to remain? a month? a year? forever? He knew not, he questioned not. Was it not God who commanded? What right had he to question? What was it to him when, where, or how? To do — that was his work: and then to wait in silence, in confidence for all the results which God would bring about in His own way and His own time. He arose and took the child and His Mother, and the sun rising over Judea already saw him and his holy charge wandering from the home of his fathers through the vale of Hebron, beyond Gaza, into the country of burning sands and scorching suns, even as the orders of the murderous king are being put into execution and the innocent babes of Bethlehem were shedding

the first blood of Christian martyrs. If the voice of Mary was not like the voice in Rama of Rachel bewailing her child, it was due to the prompt obedience of St. Joseph, to his unquestioning faith, his implicit confidence in God's providence, and his utter renunciation of self in the following of God's Will.

From these two occasions in the life of St. Joseph is it not clear that he possessed in a most extraordinary degree the sublime virtue of a noble faith and magnificent trust in God? The more we ponder his life, the more we see these heavenly virtues displayed in every act, in every trait of his most lovely character. In the direst poverty he still possessed the wealth of happy contentment, and peace of mind and heart and soul was his in the midst of trying and perplexing circumstances. For what is poverty to the man who trusts in Him who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies? What terrors have the tempests and storms of earthly life to him who reads aright the story of God's eternal rainbow? Happy we, if like Joseph we can heartily utter in joy and in sorrow; in sadness as in mirth; in comfort and in distress, the same holy prayer, the same peace-giving words, "Thy will be done."

Away with all other philosophies. This only is true. Sitting at Joseph's feet let us learn it, and by its practice drive from our hearts these disturbing elements of our nature that torment us daily; this impious distrust in God; this foolish complaining of our lot in life; this murmuring against heaven; this envy of others' good. What do we see but the little length of a single day? It is God alone who knows the secrets of eternity. How, then, can we hope to understand always why we are, what we are, and where we are? Sufficient for us to

know that where we are, God has placed us to some end, whether in high or low station, in good or evil fortune; and bowing our heads to His decree, let us like Joseph humbly await the outcome which in His own good time God will manifest to our ultimate glory.

This, then, is the secret of the greatness of our Saint: this the summing up of all his virtues. Whether we consider his life of prayer, his chastity, his heavenly meekness, his simplicity of purpose, his ardent charity, and the other virtues which he possessed in such excellence, we can refer them all back to these, his faith and his obedience. For as self-will has ever been the cause of sin, and the essence of sin is disobedience to God's will, so the desire to coöperate in God's designs, readiness, simple and prompt, to execute His commands, with an absolute and lofty trust in His promises, is as the foundation of holiness and the root of all virtue. St. Joseph therefore must be not only our protector, but our model, whom all should study and all strive to imitate.

Unlike the other Saints who are set up as examples for special classes, or ranks, or conditions, St. Joseph, like Christ himself, is a universal model. To the high-born he cries, "Behold in me a prince of David's line, who knew how to prize the grace of God above earthly rank." To the lowly he says, "My life of humble toil and weary labor was brightened and lightened by prayer and confidence in God." To husbands and fathers he teaches the lesson of marital affection and the care of the family. To all he stands an example of all virtues, a pattern of all that is good, — Joseph, the spouse of Mary, the foster-father of Jesus.

Above all the thrones in heaven, next in splendor to that of our own Immaculate Queen, the throne of

Joseph rises near to God Himself. What can he ask that will not be granted by Him who, while a child upon earth, was subject to his paternal authority? With what confidence, then, ought we to approach him. If he was the father of Christ, he is ours too. If he is the Patron of the whole Church, he is ours in particular. Go to him, then, with full confidence in his love and protection. Pray to him during life, and when the hour of death shall come, then in that awful moment call upon him for strength and assistance. And may our last struggle be ended happily under his holy protection and his name be among the last words when our lips shall pronounce, as we close our eyes upon everything earthly, the prayer, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph: assist me in my last agony."

THE CHURCH

On the last occasion that I addressed you, beloved brethren, I attempted in some manner however feebly to demonstrate by arguments based upon the Holy Scriptures, from the tradition of true Christianity, and from reason itself, that the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the spiritual Head of the Church, and as the successor of St. Peter, holds that lofty position by Divine appointment.

To-day I desire to bring to your earnest consideration the subject of the Church itself. For it would seem only natural and in the order of logic that as Christ's mystical body is not divided but united, the head must not be considered apart but in connection with and in relation to the members. Therefore, the reflections and arguments which I placed before your minds upon that occasion would be incomplete unless in some manner we considered the duties, the offices, and the rights of the Church at large. Though a full month has elapsed since I spoke to you upon the meaning and interpretation of the text, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," yet I think it is not too much to expect that the argument itself was of sufficient weight, and the subject of sufficient interest, to compel a recollection of at least its most salient points, and thus establish some moral connection and harmony of thought between my discourse upon the Pope and this one to-day upon the Church.

I will not pause now to demonstrate the fact, which we

all believe, that Christ founded and established a religious body, a spiritual commonwealth, a moral kingdom to which He and all people since have given the name of Church. No one who believes in Christ at all can bring that in question. Nor will we stop to adduce arguments to show that that body, that kingdom, that commonwealth is and could be only one. Nor does it come within the scope of my plan to develop the necessity of attaching oneself as a member to that community. All these are rudiments of our faith, first principles of our religion, the A, B, C of Catholic doctrine, matters which, though always of interest to hear of and be confirmed in, yet are of such universal and, indeed, essential acceptance that there is no need of anything more than their plain statement to gain unconditional assent from all who claim the title Catholic; and my words to-day are intended only for those who glory in that name.

But what I wish to call your attention to to-day is no purely speculative matter, no particular argument or principle that concerns the establishment of the Church or its Divine origin, though these will be lightly touched upon, but the relations of the Church to us individually, and of ourselves to the Church. For just as we as citizens of the United States recognizing the legality of its Constitution and the justice and merits of its government, as a first principle, must over and above that merely mental assent give our attention to what rights as citizens we possess, and what duties we owe towards the republic the claims of which we already recognize, so, as children of the Church, believing in the divinity of her mission, must we, if we are at all reasonable, understand that there can be no right without a duty; that there can be no law without obligation; that there can be no authority

without subjection. And therefore our question to-day is not, Is there a Church, or, what is the Church? but, What is the Church to me? what am I to the Church? A question, I think, of sufficient importance to engage the attention this morning of even the most indifferent.

To the question put to me by any Catholic individually, What is the Church to me? I answer, Everything! She is so necessary to you that you cannot live without her. And if he asks me, What am I to the Church? I answer, Nothing! Nay, less than nothing, — a debtor. Answers sufficiently bold, no doubt, in this nineteenth century of ours, when the spirit of the day seems to extol personal independence to the utmost and depreciate equally all submission to authority. Yet bold as is my reply, it is not mere bravado, but truth founded upon facts; truth supported by history, open to demonstration, beyond contradiction.

Society is the aggregation of individuals, each morally free, united for the purpose of some common end, under a common law. Man by his nature is so constituted that in society with others he leads his life to the best advantage. Mutual help, the communication of ideas, the knitting together of common interests, the community of certain privileges are the principles of society, and have become the badge of civilization, and have brought forth the thousands of advantages that go to make life pleasant and convenient.

Without some form of society man would degenerate into a rude state of semi-barbarism, little above the condition of the mere brute creation. Society, therefore, is a necessary condition to any very high form of civilization. But society can exist only under certain well-recog-

nized conditions, the chief of which are individual consciousness of a moral responsibility, the recognition of others' rights, and the knowledge, clear and firm, of duties to God. And, therefore, as the Catholic Church is the one and only teacher that fully, adequately, and logically establishes, maintains, and under all circumstances defends these principles, so without her no true society can exist, no true civilization is possible.

Let me illustrate. Man is gifted with that invaluable divine gift, intelligence. As a babe he enters, a stranger, into this wonderful world of ours. The puny infant opens its eyes for the first time to the light of day and smiles unconscious of aught save the pleasure which some bauble of gaudy color that its little eyes have rested upon begets in its fancy. Years fly by, and the babe that smiled at the tinsel toy now stands with furrowed brow wrinkled with care, with eye staring into vacancy, and mouth compressed tightly and teeth well set; he looks out upon the world and asks one question, "What am I? Whither am I going? What have I to do?" Be careful, world, how you answer. The fierce look in that eye, the set teeth, the defiant attitude bid caution to beware what answer you return to this man driven to the wall by his fellow man. Beware, O philosopher, how you respond, not alone to this one, but to thousands like him, who are waiting for but one word to turn the pivot of conscience to the right or to the left. Beware, false teachers, how you answer; for upon it depend the safety, the peace, the happiness, the life of millions. Let him but hear whispered the answer that the atheist gives, and what can curb the awful fire of revenge and retaliation that burns now fiercely in his breast? Tell him, if you dare, there is no God, no eternity, no soul,

and with one bound he will clear the whole barrier of moral restraint, and with his hands reeking in the blood of his fellow man set above him in the exercise of authority, will hiss back at him, "Then there can be no law, no sin, no right." Let him but hear the doubting, half-confident answer of the unbeliever, "I am not sure that you are responsible, I am not certain of a heaven or eternity; it seems that nothing is settled; you must settle it for yourself"; and with a smile of undisguised contempt and pity for the system and the individual he brushes him aside, and as he enriches himself from his neighbor's treasures, he retorts in derision, "This is my mode of settling it."

Or if, disgusted with his stolen treasure, he stands a moment later with a weapon at his head, tell him, if you have the heart, you scoffer at infallibility, you ridiculer of authority, tell him that all beyond is the same for all; there is only rest and peace and pleasure for those beyond the grave; and as the revolver clicks and life stops he mutters back to you, "Then why live?" Come forth, ye thousand *isms* and *ites* that fill the world with your fanciful creeds and theories, and try in succession what satisfaction you can give. This man has a right to ask the question. And ye all-wise, all-knowing religion-makers are bound to answer him. Ye who strip religion of mystery, solve now the greatest of all mysteries, — man's destiny. Ye who acknowledge nothing beyond the ken of reason, reason, if you can now, with this desperate man, and prove to him his duty. No, no! You stand before him helpless in your sophistry. The jargon and poetical theories that do for parlor talk or discussion over a novel in the drawing-room fall flat upon the ear and heart and soul of this man who stretches forth his hand for

bread, and to whom you offer a stone, or a copy of the revised edition of the Bible.

You bid him open this Bible and read. His eye falls upon the passage, "Unless he hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican." He asks, Where is this church that claims authority to teach? and ye are dumb. Stand back, then, and let her who is the mouthpiece of God proclaim the gospel of peace to all men. Standing upon the foundation of the Apostles, herself the pillar and ground of truth, she says to every man born into this world, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and unknown, Hear ye, and do as I command. You were created by the living God, that you might know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, and be happy with Him forever in Heaven. Respect and obey your lawful superiors, for all authority is from God. Covet not the goods of thy neighbor, but respect the rights and property of others. Take not thy own life; for life is God's alone to give or take. Live, act, persevere. Even though all should fail here, God will crown you hereafter if only you do good and avoid evil. This she proclaims in no wavering accents; she sets them forth with an authority which says, This is God's word; he who hears it not, let him perish. Thus with one blow she fells anarchy, socialism, and infidelity, and in one word the desperate man is answered. The fixed, strong, determined face relaxes, the eyes lose their hard, questioning look and are softened. The clenched hands meet each other slowly, and with bended knee he sinks upon the ground answered, overcome, satisfied. To each query he has received a sure, unwavering reply. Who am I? God's creature. Whither am I going? Towards eternity, either of reward or punishment. What is my duty? To

do God's will, whatever that may be. He is no more the child, and the charm of a tinsel toy is no longer a pleasure to him, but at this ray of God's holy light, his soul smiles and rejoices, and thus society is saved. Authority of the law is made divine. Human life is made a responsibility. The rights of our fellow man are recognized and respected. The Church alone can do this. Every society that is not a mere passing experiment must recognize this, and the nearer society is to the standard set by the Church, the more perfect it is; the further it recedes from that standard the weaker grow the foundations of civil order, until they totter and fall and decay.

The Church, then, is the best preserver of civil society, the best defender of its rights, the best champion of its truest liberties. Without her principles no society is possible. She is the Custodian of true civilization, because she alone proclaims, by right divine, upon the authority which God has committed to her, the principles unchanged and unvarying which alone can uphold society. Whether the form of government be a monarchy or a republic matters little to her. Her principles apply equally well to both, and are equally binding and equally salutary.

She alone is by right and principle the unflinching defender of the people's rights against the oppression of tyrants such as John of England and all others like him in history. She alone in all times has taught the rich their duty to the poor, and would, to-day as of old, condemn the cruel arrogance of wealth if her voice could be heard as it was in times gone by when all were subject to her law. If she espouses the cause of the poor, it is only on condition that right is with them; for she is no mere truckler to majorities, no mere time-server. Even at the

risk of losing thousands of her sons, she will never consent, at whatever cost, to stand quietly by, much less become their patron, when avarice, not justice, is their watchword, when greed of gain and not perfect equity is on their banner, when communism, even in its mildest form and disguised as philanthropy, is mistaken for honest rights and fair and just privileges. If the Church is the champion of the people, she is also the avenger of trampled rights. If she has made kings release their heavy grasp from off a suffering people, she has with a voice no less authoritative, no less menacing, bid mere mob law of unreasonable avarice withdraw before her sceptre.

Protector of the state, she is as surely the strength of the family. By maintaining the sanctity of the marriage tie, even at the expense of losing the whole English nation to the Faith, she has shown herself the implacable foe of that worst of all social disorders, — divorce. Therefore at the very root and foundation of society she preserves and defends it against all blight and decay. From this law she has never deviated, — a boast no other church can make. Who, then, does not see plainly beyond a doubt that the Catholic Church is so necessary to man and society that without it true society, true civilization, is impossible?

But if the Church does all this for society in general, how much more does she do for her own children! The Sacraments of the Church are pledges of her love, her tenderness, and affection. From the cradle to the grave she watches over her child, yes, even beyond the grave she follows him, even after those nearest to him have forgotten him. When he comes into this world to battle with its temptations and vices she pours over his

head the saving waters of Baptism, and later on signs him with the chrism of salvation, and buckling on his armor with a word of encouragement whispered in his ear, sends him out into the world to conquer and to save.

The Church thinks always of her children. Here is a city upon which God's hand has fallen heavily. A plague has come upon it, and those who are able flee for their lives. Mothers who behold their babes stricken with the awful disease leave them to die and fly in terror. Each one, before that awful visitation, deserts those nearest to him by affection and blood, and seeks his own safety as best he may. But who is he who passes from one bed of death to another? Who is he who in the face of this awful scourge seems calm and indifferent? Behold him as he bends over this one fainting and gasping in agony and holding our redemption's sign before the fast-closing eyes, whispers, "I absolve thee." On through vacant streets he goes, with death staring him in the face, and the air filled with the seeds of the dread plague and the groans of dying men. Who is it? Who has it always been? There is only one that all the world expects to be capable of that in all countries, in all times, — the Catholic priest! He long ago left home and friends and kindred, and all else, that when such an hour as this should come there might be no tie to hold him from his duty; that he might say as Christ said, pointing to those who have need of him, "Lo, these are my mother, and my brothers, and my sisters." This man of God's Church is there, when all who can have fled, the true shepherd, ready to lay his life down for his sheep, an example of the heroic virtue inculcated by the Church, a hero of charity unknown except within her pale.

There is no time here to speak of all those other bless-

ings, temporal and eternal, which the Catholic Church bestows upon man. She is par excellence the patron of the sciences, the arts, and letters. Every University in Europe deserving the name is the outcome of the benevolence and patronage of some Catholic founder, ecclesiastic or lay. Oxford and Cambridge, in England, are but two of the long list of those that owe their origin and endowments to the fostering influence of the Church. There is no time to enumerate the Catholic patrons of the arts made glorious by Michael Angelo, Raphael, and the other great masters; nor those illustrious men in every branch of human skill who owed their inspiration to their Faith. Read their lives and then believe.

Is it any wonder, then, that we pray for patience when we see men who know better, assert that no Catholic can be a good citizen; when we hear our loyalty to our country attacked on account of our religion; when we are accused of retarding the progress of science; when all the while the Catholic Church, more than any other, can make loyal citizens, and has been ever in the front rank of science and learning and art.

The Church is to society everything. Society is the Church's debtor. Oftentimes, yes, often in spite of itself, society has been forced to recognize it. But you Catholics, you who owe not only civil peace, order, and harmony to the Church, but your hopes for all eternity, your souls' redemption and sanctification, what is the Church to you? A treasure beyond price; dearer than life; sweeter than all the delights of time, your pride, your glory, your triumph. Will you, like cowards and puny half-souled, half-spirited ingrates, blush at mention of what ought to be your greatest boast? Will you conceal the most precious jewel that man can possess? Will you, like whipped

children, stand by indifferent when stupid ignorance or loathsome bigotry attempts to hold, not it, but some fancy of their own which they take for it, up to the derision of half-instructed, petty-minded men? No, no! Not one of you who hears my voice to-day will ever consent to such moral cowardice. The Church is everything to you and you are a debtor to the Church. In this relationship you stand. See that you are faithful to its obligations, that you may hear from the lips of Christ, "Because you have confessed me before men I will confess you also before My Father who is in Heaven."

PASSION SUNDAY

Mid-Lent has passed. As day by day our Mother the Church bids her children gather closer around her she tells them again the story of her Founder, — how He walked among men and by teaching and example strove to draw them to a better knowledge of God and themselves; how He passed among them doing good, forgiving them their sins and healing their infirmities, how for His love and charity He received only insults and revilings. Now finally, she warns us by her sublime liturgy that the time is approaching when she commemorates the culmination of all His life-long labors and sacrifices that began in a poor stable and terminated on the Cross. O how profoundly does she enter into the feelings of the human heart; how wonderfully real is her sympathy with human life. Life has its seasons of joy and of sorrow, and the Church, established for man's comfort and consolation, has her seasons too of mourning and gladness. Like some majestic mountain peak the summit of which far above the region of storm or cloud enjoys perpetual sunshine, but the sides and base feel now the soft breezes of spring and again the chill blasts of winter, she triumphant in heaven gazes with unending rapture on the glory of the Sun of Justice, but militant now chants the triumph of her Lord, or mourns the temporal veiling of His divinity under the covering of human suffering.

Throughout the Lenten season she robes herself in

a garb of penance, but now during Passiontide ushered in to-day she puts on deeper mourning and places before our minds those scenes of Christ's life that have a closer connection with the sacrifices that consummated His sacred ministry among men. In her lessons she chooses from among the divine writings those passages that bring home to our minds more intimately the merits and value of that sacrifice. She places before the eyes of our soul everything that played any part in that divine tragedy. The nails and spear that pierced those sacred hands and side, the thorny crown that wounded that bruised head, the pillar and whip that were the instruments of His cruel scourging, the Cross upon which was hung the price of our redemption. All these the Church holds up to our consideration that by their testimony we may derive a deeper and more realizing sense of all that Christ suffered and all that Christ underwent that we might have life more abundantly; that each one of these witnesses might be a greater claim upon us to manifest our appreciation of such Godlike mercy by the outpouring of all the love and sympathy of which our poor hearts are capable.

Since in the atonement for man's sins, in the washing away of all that rendered man unworthy of God's love, in the restoring to humanity the birthright of an eternal kingdom, Christ acted as mediator between Heaven and Earth, as high-priest between God and the people, so to-day in the epistle of the Mass St. Paul turns our attention to the excellencies of that priesthood and its eminent superiority over the priesthood of the old law. "For if the blood of goats and of oxen sanctify such as are defiled, how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works." Christ was a priest

as well as a teacher. All the world has heard His doctrine; few have realized the nature of His ministry.

God the Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth is the Master and Lord of everything that exists. Whatever there is of life or being, whether it be the most infinitesimal portion of matter or the highest form of created intelligence, depends upon the might and strength of His right arm to conserve and sustain it. Everything that has being outside Himself is His creature and a creature of its very nature is dependent. Since action depends on existence, all nature, the whole universe, must manifest by some form or manner this dependence upon God, this subjection to His power. Sacrifice has ever been the mode of expression chosen as most fit to acknowledge God's supremacy over His creatures, and has been held by all forms of religion to be the highest kind of adoration. Whole nations blinded by vice or ignorance have turned aside from the worship of the one true and living God; but even in their idolatry they protested their allegiance and devotion to their idols by oblation and sacrifice. Thus by the very law of nature and by the very instincts of our being are we impelled to recognize in this manner our inferiority and dependence.

Even had our nature always remained as it came from the hands of God pure and unsullied, yet we would not be free from this act of religion, expressive of God's mastership. But when in an evil hour sin fell upon mankind, effacing from the soul the beauty and grace implanted there by the divine hand, when from being friends and beloved children of our Creator we became outcasts and enemies, humanity needed infinitely more

this means of propitiating the Divinity, and turning aside the vengeance of an angry God.

The Jewish people by the command of God Himself instituted various forms of prayer and offerings; the fruits of the field, the perfumes of plants, and the blood of animals were placed upon the altars of Jehovah, and as the clouds of incense arose, or the smoke of the holocaust ascended, prayers and supplications went up, beseeching God to forgive the injuries and sins by which man had offended his Maker, and pleading that the Lord, accepting these pledges of allegiance and fidelity, might blot out the iniquities of their race and spare His chosen people.

It was not allowed to every one to offer up this sacrifice. A whole tribe was consecrated and set apart from the rest of the people that thus sanctified they might stand in the holy temple, and with clean hands and hearts purified, perform the sacred functions of their ministry. Once in the year the great High Priest, supreme representative of the whole people before God, entered into the Holy of Holies, the part of the temple where He alone was permitted to enter, and there alone with God, offered to Him the peace offering and the holocaust.

So long as these sacrifices were offered up in purity of heart and simplicity of devotion, God accepted them and poured upon His chosen people blessings and tokens of satisfaction. But a time came when empty lip-service took the place of prayer, and ceremony took the place of reality. Then God was no longer pleased with His people. He averted His gaze from the temple, and He closed His heart against the vain religion of external observance. The Jews had forgotten the significance of the law, and, that lost, their whole religion was but a

mockery. Forsaken by His own people, ignored by that nation that He had chosen as His own and upon whom He had lavished every promise of His mercy, it seems as if God grieved like a fond father whose offspring has rejected him. By the voice of the holy writer He bewails that He has brought up children and they have despised Him. Where now is the true God worshiped as He deserves? He casts His eyes over the nations of the Earth and all, all have deserted Him. Nowhere is He rightly adored, nowhere, upon all the broad earth peopled by the works of His own hands, does He find an altar upon which is offered in His name a clean oblation, a holy sacrifice. Mankind has gone after folly and iniquity. Sin triumphs and the demon has erected his throne where God alone should be King. The iniquities of ages, the offenses of generations rise up before His throne, and cry for vengeance upon man who, created to serve God only, has bound himself in slavery the vilest and most abject to everything that is lowest in brutish sensuality.

A million voices, harsh and tumultuous, rise up from every corner of the world in discord that seems to drown the holy song of the adoring angels, and cry, "Justice of God, we demand retribution. Strike with the mighty thunderbolts of thy vengeance the race of man. If thou art an attribute of the divinity, assert thyself, and be not mocked by those who are His creatures." Already the God of battles has lifted His arm as if about to answer this appeal. O God, if it falls, what will be the awful consequence? Who is there that can stay its tremendous power? Who is there in heaven or on earth that dare stand between man and God, and by bearing the blow of vengeance upon his own back, avert the anger of the Divinity from sinful man? What man is there with soul

of spotless purity unknown to sin who, as a priest offering sacrifice, will take upon himself the sins of humanity, will offer up himself as a holocaust to God's justice? There is not one. And if there were, yet would the offering be insufficient.

No, not even if all the bright and pure intelligences that surround God's throne were to offer themselves for man's pardon would the measure of justice be filled. There is not among created beings an offering adequate or a priest worthy by his own merits to turn aside the just retribution that soon must fall. For the guilt is infinite and the oblation would be but finite. But behold, who is He that stands before the eternal Majesty of the Godhead? He seems to be of men, and yet divinity shines out from Him as from a luminary that sheds a radiance upon all around it. Purity is written on that brow and innocence beams from His eyes.

It is Christ the eternal Son of God, the incarnation of the Divinity. With mercy and love in His features He raises His hands to His heavenly Father, and in a voice that sounds through all the courts of heaven, He says, "Behold I come to do Thy will. Make me the victim of men's ingratitude. Smite me for the wrongs they have committed against Thee. Their offenses have cried to Thee for a ransom of infinite worth. My blood be the ransom." He is cruelly nailed to the hard Cross and raised up hanging thereon bruised and bleeding in every limb and fibre of His body. Lifted there between earth and heaven, He the great High Priest of future good offers Himself as the holocaust to God for man. Every drop of that Blood is of infinite value, and He pours It out even to the last drop. Oh the efficacy and power of that Blood. It rises before the offended Ma-

jesty of God, and at the sight of It the arm of vengeance is relaxed; and then It courses in ample streams over the souls of penitent sinners, cleansing them until every vestige of iniquity is washed away and grace dwells where sin had ruled. Of what account now is the sacrifice of anything created, since the Creator is Himself both Priest and Victim? Of what merit now is the spilling of the blood of goats and of oxen, when the Precious Blood of Christ flows in abundant streams down the altar of the Cross over all humanity?

No more need for the High Priest of the old law to enter into the Holy of Holies to supplicate God for pardon, not only for the sins of the people but even for his own sins, since Christ the Mediator of the new testament has entered into the court of Heaven to plead not for Himself who is without stain, but for all mankind.

Thus is the Old Law superseded by the New, and the kingdom destined for a single people has by the merits of Christ's Blood become the heirloom of every Christian. We are of those ransomed by that Blood. We are of those for whom that kingdom has been purchased at so dear a price. There is nothing that can deprive us of that kingdom but our own renunciation of it. There is nothing that can rob us of the merits of that Precious Blood but our own refusal to partake of It. Christ died for all and His Blood is sufficient for all. It was spilled not only for mankind in general but for you individually. Each one of you here present and each one of the sins you have ever committed were before the mind of Christ the great High Priest of the New Law when He performed this most solemn act of His eternal ministry. Will you make vain this oblation? Will you make a mockery of this awful sacrifice? Will you be of the num-

ber of those who cover their souls with an impervious clothing of sin upon sin without remorse, without repentance, and who drew forth from the Sacred Heart that wail of grief and sorrow, "What utility in My Blood? I have poured it out in torrents upon mankind, and some of them have lifted up their hand to ward it off as if it were some injurious element instead of a balm that heals and a soothing draught that vivifies and refreshes." As in Paradise a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth, so the Blood of Christ wells up from Calvary to water into life each soul that has been scorched by contact with burning sin.

Soon with the Church you will kneel at the foot of the crucifix, gazing with sorrow-stricken hearts upon the Priest and Victim whose merits have saved your souls from death and perdition. So prepare your hearts in the mean time that as you kneel there you may realize in fullest depth of meaning all that is comprised in that great ineffable sacrifice that is a stumbling-block not only to the Jews but to all who fail to comprehend the extent of God's love for man, which prompted Him to give His only begotten Son that the world might be saved; that love which compelled the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to annihilate Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross; that love which burst through the confines of His Sacred Heart and poured out His Blood from every pore of His Sacred Body.

May that Blood of Christ, who offered Himself unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Is there one here present who is able to say as Christ said to the Jews, "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Of that our own conscience is the

testimony. Our works have been soulless and unprofitable because performed without God's grace. Let us arise from the dead, and washing our souls in the Blood of the Lamb slain for our redemption, let us begin to serve God in sincerity and truth.

THE WORD OF GOD

A WORD is the expression of thought. It is the picture of what is in the mind, and is the expression of what the intellect conceives. As the picture upon the canvas brings before the eyes of the spectator the ideal conceived in the mind of the artist, as the sculptured figure that has received the last touch from the sculptor's chisel is the embodiment of the artist's conception, so the word is the picture of the mind, the reproduction of the idea. God's word, however, is not a reproduction of His Essence, a duplicate of Himself, but is God Himself. His intellect is His being and His very Essence. God's own Word then is God; and this truth St. John declares when he says, "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God." In this strict sense of speaking therefore Jesus Christ is the Word of the Father. He was the living expression of the divinity from all Eternity. He is the Uncreated Word. He was the "Light of the world" and the "Life of men." His life was the language of God that spoke to man of all that was good and just.

But the expression "the Word of God" is used in another and broader signification. It is the *revelation* of Divine Truth to mankind; and in this sense it embraces the teachings which God in the Old Law and Christ in the New delivered to be taught by writing or word of mouth. It is called God's Word because it is the language proceeding from the mouth of God to humanity. It is the Gospel which the Almighty delivered to the

ministers of His Church to be published throughout the world, that by it they might know God's will and commands, and by its holy influence in the building up of the soul and character, transform fallen man to a more living likeness to God Himself. By this word always old yet always new was the mission of Christ to be perpetuated to the end of time. By this word was man to obtain a true and perfect knowledge of himself; and by modeling himself upon its laws, and by conformity to its precepts, he was to acquire for himself that disposition of soul that would render him worthy of eternal happiness.

The word of God then is the communication of God's will to man. The command of Mohammed to his apostles was, Go forth and conquer. The command of Christ to his disciples was, Go forth and preach. To the one the conquest of kingdoms was the all-important result, and so the sword was unsheathed and put into the hands of the leaders of Moslemism. To the other the only desire was the conquest of the soul, and hence they started out upon their battle with the world armed with the sword of the spirit, God's Word. And before this all-powerful weapon whole nations fell, prisoners, vanquished, conquered,— conquered to a nobler, purer, better life; conquered to a higher and sublimer knowledge of their eternal destiny; conquered to the love of God. How extraordinary indeed must have been that weapon that could thus have laid low the proudest philosophers, and crumbled into very dust the idols of the pagan world! — this word of God which Jeremias likens to a hammer that crushes hearts as hard as rocks, or a fire that dries up the swamps of vice and consumes all baser material before it, saving only the tried gold; this word of God which is as the thunder that makes

the earth tremble, or as the whirlwind that bends and breaks the cedars of Lebanon, or as a light that dispels the darkness of ignorance, or as a precious rain that moistens and soothes the troubled soul, or as a seed that falling upon fertile ground brings forth fruit a hundred fold. Truly before such a weapon no man can stand. Launched as a javelin from Heaven by the right Hand of God, it must penetrate through the hardest coat of mail and strike the heart itself. There is no phase of human life for which it does not provide. There is no height of wisdom to which it does not reach. There is no depth of vice and iniquity which it does not sound; there is no wound that it does not heal, no sorrow it does not soothe. It sounds in the courts of princes, and reminds them of their frailty, Remember man that thou art but dust; it reminds the proud man of his foolish vanity; it whispers in the ear of the unjust and dishonest man of the prison whence no man shall go out until the last penny be paid. It spreads before the iniquitous the folly of their lives, and makes them shrink and cower for very fear of the punishments that await them unless they repent; and it brings peace and consolation to those who sit in sorrow and affliction, as they hear those consoling words, Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

No wonder that Christ's ministers have brought the world subject to His feet. The word conquered where the sword was powerless. So it must be till the end of time. For while one by one the ministers of God's word pass away, the Holy Spirit, the life and power of the word, is forever, and though the trumpet that God chooses to employ may be old and unfit for use, the voice of God is still there according to the promise

which He Himself made when He said, Go forth and preach, and behold I am with you all days.

It would seem that this word of God, so powerful, so luminous, so healing, so efficacious in itself, would transform its hearers into men who, drawing thence the secrets of God's mysteries, would show by their lives that they understood the truths they had learned. Does it not seem wonderful that we who hear so often Christ's doctrines of the hatefulness of sin, of the eternal punishments due to it, of the reward of virtue, and of the heaven that is prepared for those who obey God's law, should yet go on, often all our lives, in open opposition to our faith; our deeds in plain contradiction to our belief; our actions in open defiance to our knowledge. This seeming want of fruitfulness of God's word, this apparent lack of results where the greatest results might naturally be expected, was no secret to Christ. It was the difficulty that stared Him in the face from the first moment of His public ministry. He not only spoke God's word; He was God's Word, yes, God Himself. Yet although His life was consumed in publishing the Gospel in streets and byways, in the crowded city of Jerusalem, and by the quiet hillside, in the temple, and upon the open seashore, yet how meagre, how very meagre, were the practical, visible effects of his own personal labors in preaching the Divine word.

In the scene of the Gospel to-day He takes occasion to explain this phenomenon. A vast crowd had gathered about Him to hear His words. Looking abroad over this vast assembly of people of all ranks and stations, seeing upon their faces the different motives that have brought them around Him; upon this face curiosity, upon another mockery, upon another indifference, upon

another earnest attention and good-will; and, reading their hearts as well as their faces, He sees clearly the different results His preaching produces upon each, He solves for them and for us all this mystery of the apparent sterility of God's word.

"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed some fell by the wayside and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it choked it. And some fell upon good ground, and being sprung up yielded fruit a hundredfold." Here, then, our Lord Himself gives us the reason of this strange fact. It is the ground and not the seed that is at fault if the fruits come not forth. It is the soul and not God's word that is deficient in fruitfulness of good results. How plain Christ makes it all. He classifies the different kinds of hearers to whom the word is preached. In every congregation gathered to hear a sermon there are these four classes enumerated by Christ. First: the indifferent hearers — they who come to church or listen to the word of God with almost any disposition but the proper one. They put their religion on as they do their best coat, and for about the same reason — because it looks well. It is the proper thing to go to church, so they go. But, being there in body, they are leagues off in spirit, and, while the voice of the preacher is sounding in their ears, their thoughts are upon anything but the sermon. Far from following with attention the lesson which is given for them, they are glad when it is over, and, with a yawn, straighten themselves to enjoy the musical part of the service, which, as it may please without labor, is to them

of far greater importance than any sermon could be. No public speaker ever stood before an audience without being confronted by some of this class, of all others the most discouraging and dispiriting to see. What man who ever came before any assembly with his heart filled with his subject, consumed with the solemn importance of what he has to say, convinced of the benefits that his discourse is fraught with, and burning to arouse his auditors to the same interest which stimulates himself, has not, at such a sight, felt his heart sink within him? As he looks over his audience, his eyes rest upon a face, the blank expression of which tells him plainly that what he says is to him only as a meaningless rumbling; that his words scarcely ever reach the mind, much less enter the soul. How can God's minister but feel grieved by the thought that he who comes commissioned by God Himself to announce the most sublime and sacred truths, he who has to proclaim to those assembled before him the most useful, beneficial, and necessary doctrines, to warn, to beseech, to entreat all in the name of the most High God, and as His emissary, is called on to behold men who treat all this most sacred duty as if it were a mere perfunctory exercise that had to be got over, and the quicker the better. Beware you who thus insult God's word. Beware you who thus allow the seed to be scattered by the wayside, to be trampled upon by every unworthy distraction that has full access to your soul. Beware lest you be found worthy of the awful threat to the lukewarm in God's service, of being so revolting in His sight, and so distasteful to His infinite Majesty, as to be vomited in disgust from the mouth of God.

The second class of hearers is likened to the rocky soil upon which the seed falls indeed and for a short time

springs into life, but not having the necessary moisture, dies before the fruit appears. Christ declares that this class of men are they who receive the word with joy and who believe for a while, but in time of temptation fall away. Alas! poor humanity, how weak, how utterly incompetent it is. How many a man has listened to a sermon with rapt interest, has followed it from beginning to end, as the Gospel says, with joy. He realizes the truth of it all; indeed, sometimes so well that he wonders if the preacher is not preaching to him individually, so near at heart and so closely do the words strike home. His heart sinks as he hears of the awful punishments of sin; tears stand in his eyes as he is told of the tender love which, that he might be redeemed, moved God to send His only begotten Son to die for him. His eye brightens and his pulse quickens as he hangs upon the lips of the preacher who announces to him the hope of sure pardon by repentance, and when the sermon closes he secretly resolves within his own breast to be true to what he has heard, to carry out the resolution which the words of the sermon have framed for him, and in the future to live more in accordance with God's will. Alas! upon what soil is all this to grow? Deep down into a certain corner of his heart he does not see, because he will not look, the rocks of stubborn vice which lie there, and which will render fruitless all hope of reform until they are unearthed and removed from the garden of the soul. But there they are allowed to lie; and meanwhile all these good seeds, that might otherwise sink into the fertile earth, grow for a day, and already begin to take on the appearance of a fixed plant, when, alas! a little gale arises, a slight storm of passion, and because the roots are near the surface, unable to penetrate the impenetrable rock,

the tender, incipient plant is torn ruthlessly up and cast away to rot and wither and decay. Thus a stubborn, blind attachment to one pet sin, hidden or kept from sight, may ward off as an impenetrable shield every arrow which God sends to the heart, and prevent its being subjected to the law of God.

The third class, perhaps the most numerous, is likened to the soil which, fertile and capable of nurturing the seed intrusted to it, cannot on account of thorns bring forth the fruit it ought otherwise to produce. This is a busy world. The days in which we live are days filled with interests and occupations that engross every faculty of both mind and body. Life is so short, and the people of to-day have so much to stimulate them to ambition that almost every moment is devoted to the occupations or interests among which our lot is cast. Even the recreation and pleasures that are necessary for the body in order to keep up the strength of a man to enable him to perform his work without injury to his physical welfare are often put aside, and the man becomes such a slave to his occupation that he is unable to think or speak or hear of anything else. From early morning until very late at night he plans and builds and destroys and builds again, until at last the brain is too tired and the body too weak to continue, and he sinks from sheer exhaustion into a dangerous illness, and perhaps even dies, from his excessive attention to his business interest or financial success. Often when the doctor gives a long name as the apparent reason of an early death, the real cause is nothing more than that very common disease of to-day, overwork. Meanwhile, where is the time for the soul's interests? Without uncommon watchfulness, the occupations that fill the mind for six days in the week

will certainly encroach upon the duties of the seventh, if, as is undoubtedly often the case, religion is allowed to hold the chief place only on one day, instead of pervading by its influence every act and deed during the whole week.

What we think most about, what absorbs our attention most, will certainly be the ruling influence in our life. If at the end of our Sundays we put aside and out of mind the thoughts that have been sown there as we listened to God's word, if we do not put into practical operation the suggestions we receive from the Holy Ghost through the words of the preacher as we go through our daily routine of duties, how will it be possible for that seed to bear the fruit which God will justly expect to reap from it? God blesses industry. It is the mother of all material improvement that has come into the world. But He blesses it doubly when it is animated by the Christian principles that elevate it to a virtue, and make it capable not only of earning the temporal advantages that follow it, such as a comfortable home and an abundance of this world's goods, which are also His blessings upon the industrious man, but give it also that grand and sublime capacity of meriting an eternal home and God's never-ending love. Does this imply that a man must give up his interest in his occupations and devote half of his time to visiting the church, and performing other external acts of religion? By no means. If your religion is of the right kind, it will only double your interest without any prejudice to your soul. Do you think that religion of the proper practical kind would make a man a poorer merchant by encroaching upon the grounds of his business? Surely not. It would make his business principles correct; it would engender in him the spirit of honesty and fair dealing; it would make him

scrupulously exact with regard to his methods of trade; it would make him upright and honorable. Are not these just the qualities that insure lasting success and permanent confidence in every man of trade, and that are recognized as necessary to every man who hopes to merit the confidence necessary for any measure of business prosperity?

Religion demands that we devote some time to external acts of devotion. But religion by no means consists in these. Does it take any time to remember God's presence? Do principles of faith and devotion occupy any space or weigh so much that they should be considered in the way or an unnecessary burden? Beware of the thorns that spring up and choke the growing plant. If you would see at the end of your life something more than a line of figures upon an entry book, or a bank account that it will puzzle you to dispose of honestly, then put down alongside of the row of figures that represent your daily earnings and savings, your material goods, a list of figures that at the last hour will be the only ones that will give you no worry or fretting, — the record of a good life well spent. They are the only figures that will be then of any consolation to you. Upon their amount will depend your eternal happiness. They will represent the harvest that you have gathered from the good seed that was planted in your soul by the hand of God, nourished by His grace, and kept free from the thorns of worldly cares by your watchfulness and faith.

To which of these classes do you belong? God forbid that you should ever be among the first. You would be a scandal to those who see your indifference and disrespect to God's word, and would bring God's wrath

upon your head by the insult you offer to His Holy Spirit.

If you are present during a sermon, then for the deference due to God's word, if not for your own spiritual welfare, manifest at the very least some show of respect for the words that are intended for you to understand and lay up in your heart. A person who would yawn, or show want of interest in the conversation of another, would not be tolerated in good society. Is it possible that social law and politeness receive more attention and observance than the reasonable obligation of Christians to respect God's word uttered in His own house? If every one would but listen with intelligent attention to the sermon, no matter how, where, or what it may be, he would be sure, infallibly sure, to find in it something applicable to himself, and interesting, too, if he would make the effort to follow closely.

If, however, you are not of this class, then let us see to which of the other three. Remember that until the field is cleared of rocks and weeded of thorns no tender plant of God's holy grace can blossom into the fruit that merits eternal life. Come to the sermon with the determination to learn. There is no rostrum from which sublimer, nobler, holier words go forth. The pulpit is the throne whence issue to humanity those high, ennobling principles of virtue, which for the last nineteen hundred years have been as the very salt of the earth. What matters the poor mouthpiece which God deigns to use? What matters the mere instrument which God condescends to employ? As we look upon some masterpiece of art, what matters it to us whether the effects we admire so much upon the canvas were produced by a brush of finest camel's hair or a mere rag of coarsest fibre?

The inaptitude of the means used brings only the more credit to the artist, for then his skill is seen to transcend the instrument, and his genius is only the more apparent from the very unfitness of the means he employs.

Was Jesus Christ less God under the rags of mockery which He wore through the streets of Jerusalem than in the resplendent light of Heaven as He stood transfigured upon Tabor, so glorious that His apostles were forced to cover their eyes lest the very brightness that shone out from Him should blind them? Under both conditions He was the Word of God. Be wise, then, with the wisdom of sincere faith. Learn to distinguish the clothing from the man. Open your souls to the light of God's word. Weed and till and harrow the garden of your soul, and then the seed which drops therein from the hand of God, warmed by the sun of God's grace, will spring and bloom and ripen into good fruit, to be your harvest of eternal joy.

PREPARING FOR CHRIST

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THE Church's Calendar marks the close of another year, and opens to our souls afresh the virgin page of a new cycle of fasts and festivals, on this first Sunday of Advent. Once again for us the last leaf of the old, old story is perused, once again has God permitted us to witness and to follow, Sunday after Sunday, and feast after feast, the wonderful scenes of mingled joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, always of deepest interest, with which in her sacred liturgy she illustrates and exemplifies the life of Him whose death gained life for man.

The book was closed last Sunday with the warning sentence, "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The divine drama closed as we beheld the awful scene of the last judgment. We know the book almost by heart. The scenes of every Sunday's Gospel are easily recalled. To-day the beginning of the ecclesiastical year again brings us face to face with religious duties, religious wants, religious experiences. The year is new. To-day we open it afresh. What that is new has the Church for our minds that will excite our interest? A new doctrine to engage our speculation? A new theory to interest our impatient fancy? A new explanation of some taking theory of man's origin, duty, and end? Nothing of the kind. Page by page she has bid you con the books of your Master's life, and when you have closed

the cover upon the last leaf, she bids you open it again and read once more the same narrative of God's love, God's justice, and God's mercy; and between the lines man's weakness, man's misery, and man's sin. For nineteen hundred years she has told the same story, and until time shall be no more, she will continue to tell it. She has nothing new to tell, for truth is ever one and ever old.

Let those who look for a religion that will amuse them by its novelties go elsewhere. Novel theories have no place in the Church. To the little child who hears it for the first time it is startling in its novelty, but when that same person lies, it may be ninety years hence, awaiting death, after a long and varied life, it will still be startling even in its familiarity. New thoughts must come to us, new sentiments arise in us, new emotions, new affections animate us, as day after day, and year after year, we hear again the same lessons, the same commands, the same precepts, the same counsels reiterated. The gospel grows with us, or rather in us, by its repeated utterances. Each new phase of life makes clearer to us the hidden meaning of every line. We listen unmoved, because we only half understand, to the trite narrations of each event. It seems to us all so obscure at times, so irrelevant, so impracticable. But suddenly an unexpected event in our lives, a corner quickly turned in our career, and there stands out before us with every word clearly cut in our hearts, every sentence ringing out in clear significance, a meaning that in other days fell empty from the preacher's lips, and passed over our souls only upon the surface without leaving any impress to mark their passing. It is always so.

When, as children, we learned to hum those touching

verses, what meaning had its quaint refrain then to our inexperienced hearts : " Be it ever so humble there is no place like home " ? We wonder why those older than we who sing it always lengthen out its cadence, until its last words are but a sigh. But when we have left its sacred associations forever; when we have bid good-by to its walls, even though the humblest; when we feel weak and crestfallen at the sight of hopes downtrodden, of dreams vanished, of friends gone from our sight, whither God knows; when in older years we stand far from the old protecting roof, and look back upon half-forgotten scenes of childhood and all its fond surroundings; ah, then when we repeat the old time-worn song, we realize, as we chant that dirge of childhood's innocence, of youthful happiness, of all that made life so dear, a meaning that when at first we heard it, not once appealed to us, not once affected us.

The young man of twenty-one hears God's minister exclaim: " Come ye that are burdened and heavily laden and I will give peace to your souls." His life is all sunshine. Not one sorrow weighs upon his heart, not one grief shadows his brow. And so Christ calls in vain, because His words remain unintelligible. But wait. Years will change everything. However bright may be his path, however flowery his way through life, however he may trip through youth and manhood to the sweet, enchanting music of buoyant hopes and pleasant realizations, the time must come to our young man of twenty-one, as it comes to all, when grief and sorrow stand at his door; when unhappiness comes to shroud his light heart with its darkening veil; when joy will seem a mockery; when society is intolerable, and loneliness is unbearable; when he cannot endure the empty sympathy of others

or the brooding melancholy of his own heart. Ah, then in a flash, all radiant with meaning, all significant in hope, all clear and full and sweet, resounding through the most secret chambers of his heart, lighting up both soul and heart and face with the glad light of peace, tearing asunder the gloomy veil of melancholy, bringing back the bright light to his eyes, the warm blood to his cheek, the quick throb of his heart, those same words, before unmeaning, are now full of reality to him: "Come to me all ye that are heavily laden and I will refresh you." Now for the first time after so many years he realizes the deep, tender, fatherly, godlike pity, the loving yearning, the heartfelt sympathy, the ardent longing of these simple words pronounced by the Saviour centuries ago, repeated over and over and over again through all the long ages before he was in existence, and reiterated in his ears since he first heard of Christ. It is the same gospel, it is the same old loving invitation to unburden our souls and cast our cares upon Him, who came to bear them all. Only it is new to him now; new with all the startling revelations of the tender infinite love of God for man; new in the unselfish desire to be our help; new in the long-sought-for, never before experienced, untold happiness in finding at last a true consoler, a true sympathizer.

Oh, would that we needed not the fiery ordeal of unhappiness or degradation to realize the meaning of this old, ever-repeated narrative of God's love. But it does seem that only when we have realized to the full our own utter worthlessness can we understand how far down the arm of God's mercy has stooped to lift us up to the transcendent heights of co-inheritance with Christ. They who have tasted the bitter cup of the sorrow that

comes of earth can best realize the meaning of that beautiful description of Heaven as represented by the assurance that there no grief shall enter and that God Himself shall wipe from the eyes of His children every tear. They who have been down-trodden and oppressed, they who have led lives of complete submission to the will of others can best appreciate the language that describes the better land as a place where all are kings; they who have yearned over the straying away from God's law of those that are dear to them, the mother who passes long wakeful nights silently weeping for the son who were better dead, and who waits and waits patient and prayerful for the sign, that never comes to her, that the child of her bosom has begun at last to retrace his erring steps.

Such a mother, such a friend, can best understand the tenderness of the Sacred Heart; can best realize the deep longing desire that sends out that half-entreaty, half-reproach, that issues from these lips, so sad, so touching: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." At the door, strong-barred from within; at the door over which the rank weeds droop heavy and dead; at the door becoming each day more difficult to loose because the twigs that block its entrance daily increase in strength and resistance. The face of Christ grows more and more anxious, but the patience of His soul only increases. So it is with the Church's liturgy. Its constant repetition only wearies those whose hearts are clogged, whose minds refuse to see the beauties it portrays. Some day all this will change, and what seemed old and trite will appear all new, all wonderfully wise.

Standing as we do upon the threshold of the new Church year it is well to act according to these considerations. Nineteen hundred years ago Christ came into the world.

That was the First Advent of which this one that opens now before us is but a commemoration. Then Christ came in person into the world, — the world so stupid in ignorance amid the very highest material culture; so steeped in wickedness under the very shadow of the Pantheon; so godless though it numbered its deities by hundreds; without virtue while celebrating virtue's merits; needy amid incalculable wealth; starving amid fields of plenty! Christ came, and His teaching has transformed it all. Whatever the world has to-day of virtue, of honesty, of purity, of morality it owes to Him. For every teacher of sublime doctrines has borrowed His science, or counterfeited His virtues, that men might sound their praises. As by His word He created the world, so by His word He re-created all. Though He shall come no more in visible form until the last dread day when He shall come to judge the living and the dead, yet we call this season Advent, and pray and fast therein as John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Christ, because into the world of our souls as into this material world around us Christ must come, unless, indeed, we desire that our souls, like the pagan world, shall perish amid plenty, and die of thirst amid an ocean of refreshing waters.

By the same appeals the Church to-day, as twenty or fifty years ago, entreats you to arise from sleep and awake from sin. By the same means she exhorts you to empty your souls of yourself that Christ may be your all. By the same prayers and fasts and practices she trains you to the self-same virtues that have been the fruit of her industry for generations. She has nothing new, because human nature never changes; man's spiritual needs are never new; they are always the same; man's weakness is

ever the same; the world is always the same; temptations are always the same; Truth is always the same; God is always the same. She needs no new moral remedies for man's infirmities; for besides the fact that she has her instructions direct from Christ, the great physician of the soul, her experience has proved that her treatment of man's spiritual diseases has been always efficacious, even in the very worst of cases. How many penitent Magdalens has the simple narration of that touching scene in the Temple produced where Christ saved the woman "taken in adultery" from a cruel death by His divine insight into the filthy souls of her persecutors; and moved by His divine compassion for her who stood trembling and in tears before Him, spoke to her those words so full of Divine pity, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." How many Hildebrands have been raised up, full of zeal for God's Holy Church by that other incident, the only one of its kind narrated in His life, where with more than kingly dignity and supreme command, with only a little whip in hand He drove the crowd of greedy, unscrupulous money changers from the temple courts with the words: "My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Look back long at the history of Christianity and count if you can the vast numbers of those who have left home, friends, everything, that they might freely give themselves up to God's service, only because at some time in their lives they have seen more clearly than ever before all that is contained in those words so oft repeated, so well known, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Count if you can the long row of martyrs who have stood undaunted in the presence of their persecutors, who have looked unmoved upon the

cruel instruments of torture, young tender children awaiting with calm dignity the spring of the famished beast, all rendered strong with the strength of giants because they understood the full significance of that sentence, "He who denies me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Reflect upon all this and then understand what this old unchanging doctrine has done for men. Reflect upon this and then you will understand that if the same effects are not wrought in you, it is because your hearts are callous to the gospel and not that the gospel has lost its efficacy. Ponder too that if this yearly repetition of feasts and fasts appear tiresome and monotonous to you, it is not that they no longer have in themselves the power to create interest, to stimulate your soul to good, but because as yet you have not opened your mind to their significance, or your heart to their influence. Do men tire of the sun? Yet morning after morning for thousands of years it has risen, and in the evening has set. Does its age diminish its utility? The plant that springs this morning from the earth drinks in its gentle influence, is warmed by it, and grows under its presence as effectually as did the plants and shrubs that first came forth in Eden.

Let us meet the opening of this new Advent with our minds and hearts well expanded to receive in all its fullness the word which in the coming round of feasts God shall speak to us. Let not another year go by in the school of His Holy Church without learning at least the rudiments of the spiritual life. Our past experience will help us to use well the lessons we shall learn. Let us at least show our willingness to hear and then pray for understanding. Let us cherish the truths so old and yet so new that we learned as children, and lay them up fondly

in our hearts as treasures gold cannot buy. Let us enter upon Advent in this spirit to-day, that by commemorating in earnest and not by mere routine His Coming into the world, we may be prepared to receive Him into our souls.

THANKSGIVING DAY

May it please your Grace; beloved brethren — It is a gratifying sign of the Christian character of the spirit of our country that once in the year its Chief Executive invites the citizens of the republic to turn aside for awhile from their worldly occupations and interests and cares, in order that congregating in their various houses of worship they may return thanks to the Giver of all good gifts. It is a sad day for any land when the name of God is erased from its laws and unmentioned in its statutes. At the suggestion of the civil authority and the invitation of the spiritual authority to which we owe allegiance, we come together under the beautiful arches of this glorious temple of God, to lift our hearts in grateful thanksgiving in union with the celebrant of the Holy Mass as he chants in the preface of the sacrifice, *Gratias agimus Domino Deo Nostro*, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God"; to which we respond a fervent *Dignum et justum est*, "It is meet and just." And for what shall the hymn of *Te Deum* ascend to-day? What shall be the measure of our gratitude? For everything we are and do and have; for life and action and possession are alike all God's, and by His munificence we are what we are, and we have what we possess. But this day has a special significance. It is a state day, and to observe it in its intended purpose we need but observe the motives which prompted its establishment. It was that, as a nation, we might turn with hearts filled with gratitude to the God who gives us temporal prosperity.

The Church in her great hymn of praise, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, takes the lofty and sublime motive for thanksgiving from the Glory of God Himself, and she sings, *gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.* In all conditions of her existence, whether rain or sunshine, in prosperity, in adversity alike she says, "So that God has greater glory the rest matters not," *propter magnam gloriam tuam.* Day after day, in persecution and trial as in exaltation and triumph, the same chorus goes up to heaven, *Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.* All else may change; kingdoms may rise and fall; nations may be born, flourish for a day, then totter and die; her sons may suffer; her Bishops be exiled; her visible Head be captive; but her faith flinches not; her voice wavers not; still she thinks of only God's Eternal Glory! So alike, Leo imprisoned, and Hildebrand triumphant, lead the grand universal song of thanksgiving, that all adown the centuries has echoed unceasingly from that blessed night when the Angels sang it above the stable of Bethlehem, when God came down to men. This is the sublimest motive for gratitude; this the loftiest motive for thanksgiving. Thus the Church, because she is superhuman, because she lifts her head into the very heaven of heavens, and gazes with clearest vision into the Eternity of God, even while her feet tread upon the lowly earth, passes over the consideration of the gifts to the sublime contemplation of the Giver; forgets, with a sublime oblivion, the land flowing with milk and honey, the vines laden with the bursting grapes, the stores filled with the ripened grain, the fat kine lowing upon the hills, and the children of men with the gleam of plenty in their eyes, to remember only that which touches all, yet is over all, "the Greater Glory

of God!" And this because the Church deals with the eternities.

But the state, whose province is the temporal welfare of humanity, appropriately turns its grateful eyes upon those things which benefit man in his temporal career, and bids us each in his own way and after his own manner offer to the Almighty fervent thanks for all those blessings showered upon the land, making the footstool of the Omnipotent a happy abode for man.

Gratitude to the giver implies consideration of the gift. To return thanks while we trample the gift beneath our feet or cast it ruthlessly into the mire is insult, not gratitude. The servant who used his talents to gain other five, was the truly grateful one. To-day the thanksgiving that is to be more than mere lip-service must begin with the consideration of those gifts which we receive, and end with a better use of them. Who shall count the blessings which God has showered upon this favored land? With truth indeed can God say of this country, "What is there I should have done for my vineyard and have not done?" All that men prize in human life is here — territory that is vastness itself in extent, a fertile soil, a favoring climate, a wealth of rivers, the touch of two mighty oceans, mountains that rise in majestic beauty, and lakes that are almost seas, and hidden in the very bowels of the earth, the rich ores that yield prosperity, and the black crystals that give up to man the power to turn a million wheels and illumine a thousand cities! All, all these are here for the utility of man, for the profit of a great people, for the building of a great nation. And yet without one element to perfect it all, to shape it all, and fashion it all into the harmonious unity that alone is beauty, this were mere dross.

Without that living principle, that active agency that moulds the riches and the beauty of a country into the common good of its inhabitants; without the ideal citizen the mill wheels turn in vain, nay the very looms that weave the rich fabric weave into warp and woof only discord and insecurity. This woven fabric, though it clothe a nation to shield it from the cold and wind and rain, still serves but little to protect its people from the raging of elements infinitely more merciless than wind or rain or cold — the elements of lawlessness, strife, and crime. Of all the gifts of heaven to any land the good citizen is the greatest and the best.

In keeping with what appears to be a happy custom of the Catholic Union, of assembling not only to assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass offered up in thanksgiving, but to listen to a discourse upon some subject of public interest, which the nature of the day makes appropriate, I would crave your attention to the subject upon which I have proposed to speak, namely, the *Ideal Citizen.*

It has been said that *ideas* rule the world. This is not strictly accurate. It is *ideals* by which the world is governed. For ideas are but conceptions of themselves stationary, inactive. But when the conception is perfected by birth, when the idea is moved into activity by a power which has embodied it, then alone is there reality, life, action. In the history of the human race it is obvious that they who have accomplished much, who have left their impress upon the sands of time, are men who have set before them some prototype, from the lesson of whose life they have drawn inspiration and encouragement. They have laid hold of some thought as old as the world, which others had seen and passed unnoticed, and with that one thought as a fulcrum, and the enthusiasm

of a purpose as a lever, they have moved the world of their time and conditions.

Individuals form a nation; and such as is the sum total of individuals, so shall also the nation be. If the *ideas* of the individuals be base or mean, the *ideal* of the nation will be the same; and sooner or later she will perish in her iniquity, and her name become a jest and a by-word. But if the *ideal* of the nation be for justice and right, she will, by the power of God, stand up great and strong upon the earth that God shall give her. Of this let every one be certain; each of us individually contributes to the glory or the shame of the nation to which we belong. Not he alone who sits in power, but he who is the humblest laborer in the land has his share in the making of his country's honor among men; and so on all rests a responsibility, varying in degree, from which none is exempt. God has given to each his special sphere, his particular work to do; and the work of each well done fits into the design of the whole plan, and completes the whole. With the individual's work undone or feebly done, the whole design becomes uneven, and symmetry is destroyed utterly. There is then of necessity a true ideal in citizenship as in architecture. What is this true ideal, and where can it be found? Let us turn over the pages of history and gather thence the wisdom that comes of experience, which is ever the surest and truest knowledge.

The ideal of many nations has been warfare. Their annals are written in blood. From Holy Writ we learn that the ancient Assyrians were such a nation. The customs of a people are discoverable in its contemporary art. In what is left of Assyrian art we see the savagery and bloodthirstiness in which they seem to have gloried. Enter the palaces of their Kings, and you

see on all sides how their rulers loved to see themselves portrayed. Pass the huge portals guarded by winged bulls and lions with human faces, and on every wall you see delineated a people of frightful fierceness, battling with enemies, swimming rivers to the attack, shattering fortresses, beleaguering cities, torturing and slaughtering their prisoners, sweeping from land to land like a devouring fire, while above them fly fierce spirits who applaud their cruelties, and eagles carrying in their claws the entrails of the slain. Such was Assyria of old, the land whose ideal was war. And how did it all end? What became of the lions and winged bulls of battle? Read the last chapter of the prophet Nahum for answer and you will see how it passed away in fire and sword, amid the wrath and hatred of nations. Even then it was true that "he who taketh the sword, shall perish by the sword."

In her day ancient Egypt was queen among the nations. She too loved the cry of battle and the din of war. Upon her obelisks in curious writing we read of Rameses sweeping into battle amid the serried ranks of his numberless archers; we see the proud enumeration of victories won, of enemies undone, of the glories of the victors. And what to-day is left of that Egypt? The sand of the desert has buried long since both the people and their monuments. Before the might of Persia her vaunted power snapped like the reed on the banks of her mighty Nile; and out of the face of her Rameses, the most colossal statue in the world, the peasants have cut their mill-stones. The Sphinx still sits there amid a silence as of the grave, and the awful pyramids are but the gravestones of a nation buried. "He who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword."

Thank God, as a nation we have no war ideal. We

vaunt not of battles won or of enemies slain. We point not with boasting, though with pride, to the flags which, tattered by the bullets of strife, bear upon them the names of the fields where the victory was ours. But it was not war for war's sake. The cannon roared and the rifle cracked, not for glory but in defense. No standing armies or armaments drain our resources or rob the land of the flower of our youth. At the wave of a hand in days past a million men sprang to their feet in their country's defense. They seized the sword in the cause of liberty and laid it down when that was won. At the sight of the thousands slain we must agree with Wellington after Waterloo that a battle won is only less terrible than a battle lost. No, war is not our ideal. Let other lands glory in their war lords. To us peace is better than martial glory.

There is another ideal which nations are prone to set before them. It is the ideal of wealth. Of all the deceits and illusions that have hurried them to their fall, the worship of Mammon has place preëminent. Of all ideals which have led powerful kingdoms to decay, this one has been most potent. Unlike the spirit of war, which advances amid the roar of artillery and the din of arms, this steals apace noiselessly, with pleasing aspect and beguiling mien. It comes accompanied by strains of sweetest music; it weaves around its victims the charm of ease and luxury; slowly, unnoticed, it saps the vigor and manliness of a race and leaves behind only effeminacy and softness, and time does the rest. Mankind generally recoils from the fierce glare of the war-god; but wealth the hypocrite comes in such a graceful guise, flatters into such listless indolence, that the nations whose ideal it is see only the outer cloak, which looks so like the garment

of prosperity, and beguiled thus into slothful content refuse to lift the veil that hides only a grinning skeleton of death. I speak now not of the possession of wealth, nor the ordinary gaining of wealth, but of the worship of wealth, of the acquiring of wealth at whatever cost, by fair means or foul. And what has this ideal ever done for any land? Look into the history of ancient nations and see the ruin it has worked. Think of Babylon the great, and ancient Tyre, and all-conquering Rome, with their marvels of hanging gardens and inestimable merchandise and palaces of ivory and gold, and see how their barbaric neighbors swept down upon them and in a day leveled to the dust the works erected by an age of indolent wealth.

But let us come nearer yet to our own times, and see what evils the worship of Mammon has wrought in more modern days. All other evils seem concentrated in this. Christ himself names no middle term between God and Mammon. The sin of many lands has been the sin of Judas, not of Peter. Men do not deny Christ: they sell him. For their thirty pieces of silver, again and yet again, do men, yes, and nations too, give up their faith, their hope of eternity, their very God. For the lying and seductive glitter of gold, men, and nations too, have surrendered their independence, their integrity, their very souls, and have gone down to their ruin glorying in the filthy dross for which they bartered their honor and their souls. Not like the "Wise Men," who brought their treasures of gold and frankincense and myrrh to lay at the feet of the Infant Christ; not as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who brought their fine linen and spices and gave their own "new tomb" to embalm and fittingly bury the sacred Body of Jesus; not as Barnabas,

who bestowed his wealth to help the needy of the struggling church; but with the hard grip of utter selfishness have they clung to their sordid store until death relaxed the greedy hand, and man or nation has fallen headlong into the grave of contumely and oblivion, and Mammon grimly reckoned another victim.

Such are the effects of this ideal. Have we set it before ourselves? We have pleaded "not guilty" to the first ideal, can we do so likewise of the second? Pagan Rome was never so strong as when her Dictators came from the ploughshare, never so weak as when her Emperors built palaces of gold. As the gorgeous conflagration of foliage in our autumn woods is but the precursor of their winter barrenness and gloom, so the glitter of profuse wealth is not unfrequently the forerunner of personal or national ruin.

We have spoken now of the two ideals that have been chief in bringing men and nations to devastation and destruction. These from their fruits we know to be false ideals. Can we not find somewhere an ideal that will make the perfect citizen? In a land like ours where every citizen is king, where the whole prosperity of a people depends upon the character of its citizens, where the lowest by birth may rise highest in position, there is need more than elsewhere in all the world of an ideal which shall be alike effective in its operation and practical in its embodiment. Is there such, you ask, and I answer in utmost certainty there is, and I can say now what I am going to prove, that the ideal Catholic is at the same time the ideal citizen. No need to fathom the depths of human philosophy, no need to ransack the tomes of ancient libraries, no need to delve amid the sere and discolored parchments of the wise. The ideal is here,

in the air you breathe, in the altar you gaze upon, in the story you read from the pictured glass through which the light now streams. In the doctrine and liturgy of the Catholic Church is to be found the ideal we seek.

Let me recite to you a fable of Æsop. A certain husbandman, desiring to see his sons rich, called them together and said, My sons, there is a treasure hidden in my field one foot below the surface of the ground. Whereupon they all ran incontinently to the field and began to dig industriously till the whole field was dug. But in vain, no treasure did they see. The next season, however, a most plentiful crop appeared, so productive had the soil become from their digging. Here, said the father, is the treasure of which I spoke. And we, if we only dig, shall find our true ideal.

In whatever subjects men may disagree I think that all will agree in this: The stability of states rests mainly upon two conditions in their subjects, Respect for authority, and Obedience to the law. Where these two conditions are strong in a people's heart the nation must perforce be strong and enduring. Where these two conditions are weak or absent the nation soon must fall. The architect who understands not the value and place of the keystone in the arch may build paper houses to amuse children, but can never reproduce the dome of St. Peter's. The Catholic Church built upon a rock by the architect of the heavens can teach all nations, by her own practical experience, what it is that constitutes the elements of perpetuity in a nation; and she says again, Respect for authority, and Obedience to the law.

In Deuteronomy we read, when Moses exhorts the Jews to keep the commandments, " And now oh Israel

hear the commandments and judgments which I teach thee, that doing them thou mayst live, and entering in mayst possess the land which the Lord, the God of our fathers, will give you." Respect and obedience for God's commandments were the price of the stability of the Jewish nation. Law is the corner-stone upon which kingdoms rest, and the force of all law flows from the principle of authority. The leaders of anarchy and rebellion are wise in their generation when they first strive by ridicule to weaken the natural respect which the subject pays to the ruler. "It is the laugh which kills." They first laugh at the king that they may destroy the kingdom. The sword and bullet of the rebel may be met with answering shot and battlement; but what defense can the ruler raise against the malicious leer and the half-muttered taunt of the apostles of disorder? No need of muskets or the sword to effect the destruction of a nation where once the rot of disrespect for authorities and disobedience to law has entered. Who is it that best safeguards these sacred principles? What is it that hedges around these two pillars upon which the safety and duration of the state rest, with a divinity that makes them holy in the eyes of men? What institution by its infallible voice echoing throughout the world proclaims that authority is from God, and that he who resists the authority resists the ordinance of God? The influence that respect for authority exerts in the minds of men is surely a grand factor in securing permanency to the nation, and the man in whom that influence has found true response will not be far from realizing the true ideal of the citizen. Where is this voice to be heard? Where is salutary influence exerted? Let us see.

Let us examine a few of the different theories re-

garding the origin of government and see for ourselves which one meets our demands. The spirit of the age is an inquisitive one. Questions are asked about everything, and opinions expressed haphazard upon every conceivable topic, from the nature of God to the discovery of the North Pole! It has been stated and reiterated again and again here among us by leaders of modern thought that the search for truth, not its possession, is the proper pursuit of man. It is therefore natural that upon such weighty and far-reaching questions as the origin of authority and law, the would-be learned should have their theories. Lord Macaulay was right when he wrote concerning Mill's essay on government: "that nothing is more amusing or instructive than to observe the manner in which people who think themselves wiser than the rest of the world fall into snares which the simple good sense of their neighbors detests and avoids."

When the illiterate and discontented arise as they have done in the past, and in a single night pull down the rulers and trample upon the ruins of a state, and set up the red flag of no rule in the place of a national banner, these wise philosophers throw up their hands in horror at the lawlessness, not realizing that after all these things are but the practical results of their false teachings. It is not to be wondered at that all philosophy that derives the essence and origin of authority from chance, or utility, or force, should be obliged by sad experience to admit that it may be annulled and utterly destroyed by the same elements.

From the Cæsarism that rules with absolute sway, creating at its whim and enforcing at the sword's point its own ideas of justice and truth, the only maxim of which is "Might makes Right," as well as from the more modern

though not less fatal teaching of agnosticism that human government proceeds from mere conventions or utility, with its maxim, "We obey because we wish" — from one as well as the other the only logical sequel, the only practical result is and must be disorder, dissolution, and utter decay. All the systems founded upon mere human speculation are reduced to the one or the other form. Unless, then, there be a wiser philosophy than either; unless human government can be shown to rest upon firmer ground, it must be admitted that the stability of any nation is as the flower of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is "cast into the oven."

Unless then we find a higher ideal of government whereon to mould ourselves as citizens, than the one of Cæsarism proposed by the pagan flatterers of absolute despotism, or utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill and the other flatterers of mere populism, we shall still be far from attaining to that element which by assuring the solidity of authority and law, establishes simultaneously the security of good government and the happiness of a people. Whatever is purely mortal must decay whether it be man or nation. We must find a system which builds on a more solid foundation; we must discover in society something more permanent than mere humanity. Even the pagan philosopher Plato of old knew this. It is an uncontrovertible truth, says this wise man, that if God presides not over the establishment of a city and if it has only a human foundation it cannot escape the greatest calamities.

One would almost imagine that Plato here transcribed as his own the sentiment of the Royal Prophet as he wrote, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; unless the Lord keep the City, he

watcheth in vain that keepeth it," and of the prophet Isaias who said, "The nation that serves thee not shall perish." Xenophon writes that the nations founded in religion have always been the most lasting. Cicero declares that the destruction of religion means the destruction also of human society. Hume asserts that a people without religion as a basis differs little from the brutes. Rousseau in a lucid interval declares that God is the true foundation of all lasting society. Macchiavelli avows that good order is inseparable from religion. Voltaire admits that the Supreme Being must be the corner stone of an enduring state. Montesquieu traces the downfall of Rome to Epicureanism which broke down the barriers of religion and gave free scope to the human passions. All these men who have studied the history of the fall of nations (themselves of divers nations, of different times, of different creeds, and some of no creed at all) agree unanimously on the one fact, that unless the civil order rest on God it cannot last, it must of necessity ultimately crumble to decay. Now are they as a rule men who were defenders of Religion? Indeed many of them were infamously opposed to religion, and yet out of the sheer knowledge of the facts of history they were all driven to the same conclusion. Civil authority must rest on God. Whatever may have been their personal character, as witnesses of history their opinion must be respected. Indeed from the very fact that they individually had little care for the defense of religion, their evidence is of all the greater force.

Where then shall we find this doctrine delivered to us, not with the doubt of human opinion but with the certainty of absolute truth? Where is the voice which proclaims that this is not the outcome of men's speculation

but the echo of God's own word? Where can we learn this wisdom of true statesmanship not as mere conjecture but with the seal of infallible truth stamped upon it? Where but from the Catholic Church, which has taken this question out of the domain of mere opinion and places it among the catalogue of revealed truths. She who teaches man the knowledge of the ideal citizenship of heaven, speaks to him also with the certainty of one to whom God has revealed all truth, that God is the origin of all authority and law, and that the same God who has said "Keep my commandments" compels by the sanction of His own Divine Authority the obedience of men to the civil laws also. From her philosophers, her doctors, her Popes, her councils, her Apostles, the same unerring voice is heard, "Fear God — Honor the King," even as her very Founder once proclaimed: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

St. Thomas proves that human government is a necessity of our nature, arising from the very nature of humanity, not from the mere volition of men. So it must come from the Author of that human nature, who is God. The will of God, therefore, not of man, is the origin of authority and the sanction of law. Bellarmine, the great theologian, says: "The principles of government are derived not from the whim of the people but from nature itself. Nor could the whole human race, even should they all be assembled for the purpose, decree that there should be no rulers, no one by whom they should be governed. The people can neither create nor destroy the necessity of authority; for it is seated in the very nature of humanity and was placed there by God Himself."

The Council of Trent thus declares to the faithful the necessity of obedience to all authority, as taught by the fourth commandment of God. "As God commands us to obey our father and mother, so must we regulate our conduct towards princes and rulers and all others to whose authority we are subject. For the honor we pay them is referred to God of whom they are the representatives and ministers. Be their sentiments to us the most inimical, be their hostility unmitigable, their personal enmity and hostility do not release us from the duty of submissive respect to their persons and authority, for all authority is from God." And Doctors and Councils and Popes all rest the truth of the Church's doctrine upon the sublime ideal of St. Paul. He it was who expounded to the Christians of Rome the real elements of true government. Had the Roman people but listened and heeded their warning their great nation, even then tottering to decay, might have been rescued from complete destruction. Thus he writes: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but from God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

But why multiply proofs in a matter where all agree? Does not all the world know that the very essence of the Church's teaching is authority? Do not all men accede to her the title of the greatest conservative force on earth? Is it not matter of history that where she has prevailed, civil government was most secure? Is it not a matter of present knowledge that those countries which to-day are laboring to weaken her hold upon their sons are just so fast converting men from obedient subjects to rebellious and disorderly citizens? If the salt lose

its savor wherewith shall it be salted, and if short-sighted and malicious men rob society of the strongest element of permanency it can possess, who shall wonder that discord and violence and misrule rush in where before was order and peace and harmony?

Amid the ever swelling chorus of lawlessness that grates more and more loudly upon the ear, amid the harsh declamation of demagogues, and the strident exhortations of anarchists and the jealousy and petty strifes of party leaders and venders of political schemes, there is one voice that sounds above them all not with bitterness of passion but with the calm penetrating sweetness of persuasion. It is the voice of Leo, which from the Vatican, that great pulpit of the world, comes to all the earth like a voice from heaven repeating again the sacred words of St. Peter the first Pope, "Fear God — Honor the King."

Not to volumes of Pagan wisdom then, not to the flatterers of Cæsar, not to modern speculation, but to the Church alone and always, as one possessed of the wisdom of ages, in the experience of nineteen hundred years, as one who has looked on and often mourned as nation after nation bent upon a new theory and despising her wisdom has tasted the bitter fruit of its own folly, as one to whom God has given his Holy Spirit to lead her into all truth, as one who in furnishing the best ideal of citizenship, here prepares men for the greater citizenship of Heaven, — to the Church and to her alone must we too look for all that will make us worthy members of the great commonwealth. She we know to be the best school of all that is wisest in political economy. The ideal of respect for authority and obedience to law is learned best from her. She best teaches her children the awful difference between liberty and license. She soonest

detects the demagogism of the rebel, the anarchy of the socialist, and the tyranny of the strongest. She sees from afar and warns while she condemns the reign of terror with its carmagnole and the commune with its shattered cities and blazing houses.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. She watches without rest that mankind may be truly free. While we have with us a living voice that in season and out of season proclaims to the world the divinity of law, the purity of life, the honesty of trade, the absolute allegiance to truth, the inviolate sanctity of the marriage bond, the same voice in all times, whether the heathen rage or the people imagine a vain thing, we shall still have a force and an influence that shall bring forth for all men to imitate the truest ideal of the perfect citizen.

END OF VOLUME I

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